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Editorial



IMAGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

In the past few weeks, the image of a little boy, Alan Kurdi, lying dead on a beach has shaken the world, and it has shaken me. That image changed things. It is no longer easy to look the other way and ignore what is happening. Yes, finally, the catastrophic situation of the refugees fleeing war in the Middle East has sunk in, even among us who lead sheltered and comfortable lives far from war and destitution. Many of us want to help. A transformation is hopefully taking place.

The first time I saw the image of Alan Kurdi was on the internet. It was one or two days before the start of my class on children's literature. I was preparing what to say in my first lecture but kept returning in my thoughts to the three-year old boy lying face-down in the sand. In my mind, the image merged with that of Pinocchio: the shocking scene at the end of the Disney movie, when Jiminy Cricket finds Pinocchio on the beach, drowned. This comes after Pinocchio has saved Gepetto and the others from death by fleeing Monstro in a raft. Of course, in the story, Pinocchio is eventually resurrected and transformed into a "real boy" by the Blue Fairy. But the scene is disturbing nevertheless—and today, after Alan Kurdi's death, even more so. The visual similarities are apparent: the size of the victims, the clothes (the shorts, the red and black colors of the clothes), the face-down position and eerily relaxed posture, the site (and sight) of death. Even the situation or back story (flight from danger across the sea) and the tragic outcome, are similar.

I am of course not suggesting that the photographer was consciously referencing Disney's *Pinocchio*. Nor am I saying that the (temporary) death of a fictional character and the death of a real boy can be compared—they cannot. But the power of photos, films, literature—whether fictional or documentary—resides in their ability to appeal to our imagination. Art can be transformative both when it serves invented comedy and real life tragedy. The real transformation miracle in *Pinocchio* is not that a puppet is resurrected or even that he is turned into a real boy but that we, the audience, have been transformed: we have started caring for him. In this world, Alan Kurdi will not

be magically resurrected by a Blue Fairy. But the image of his death is truly transformative. And that is a miracle.

The ability to respond imaginatively and caringly to images and texts, such as the ones described above, goes way beyond the requirements of functional literacy. To be able to decode pictures and words is important, but if the words and pictures do not connect at some deeper level of our being, and make us *feel*, how can we claim that we can read and see? The oral tales, the verses and songs, the picture books, the movies, the books—in the end, they are important because they teach us what it is to be human.

Bookbird matters because books and stories matter. I am not the only one who thinks this way. In this issue, Beverley Naidoo writes about why and how she became a writer, but also why and how children's books matter. From another angle, Steven Withrow discusses the hows and whys of translation. The work of translation is often overlooked, which is a pity; without translations all countries and languages—even the biggest and most widely dispersed—would be poorer. Translation makes it possible to connect with peoples and cultures all over the world. One of the featured articles, Lisa Chu Shen's "Translation, Children's Literature, and Lu Xun's Intellectual Struggles," brings up one such case. Moreover, besides the topic of translation, there is also a geographic connection here to two other China-themed texts in this issue. Xu Xu writes about "The Image of China in *Red Scarf Girl*: Promoting International Understanding or Reinforcing Western Hegemony?" And Qi Tongwei contributes with a Letter: "Traditional Culture in Chinese Children's Literature after 1980" And speaking of geographical connections, a very specific application of geography—or should I say cartography—and children's books is demonstrated in Jochen Weber's contribution, "Around the world in 70 maps"—an article based on an exhibition displayed by the International Youth Library. The map is a way of figuring and making sense of the world. And although maps are common in children's books and fulfill various purposes, the study of this book feature has long been neglected. Finally, there is also an article called "Faithful Frogs and Titillated Toads" in this Beautiful Bookbird.

Go see!

Björn Sundmark



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Translation, Children's Literature, and Lu Xun's Intellectual Struggles

Chu Shen

Introduction

The question of children, which had for so long been relegated to the margins in the hierarchical society of feudal China, began to assume an important place in the Republican era (1911-1949). Discontented with children's literature passed down from the feudal society, Lu Xun (1881-1936) and the like-minded contemporaries sought to create a new literature for children via the means of translation. Their work pointed forward to the direction for modern children's literature in China which has been neatly summarized as having taken "the Lu Xun path" (see, e.g., Jiang Feng and Han Jin). Scholarship on Lu Xun's translations tends to view his efforts along the lines of politics and nationalism, which carries the indelible imprint of Maoist evaluations of Lu Xun as the foremost intellectual figure in modern China. Indeed, insofar as nationalism has always viewed children as its "natural seed" (Ala A. Alryyes 67) and educating new generations as "central to the ideology of nation-building" in Republican China (Andrew F. Jones 104), the overtly political and nationalist interpretation of Lu Xun's translations seems to have been further justified.

It seems to me that such interpretations may risk oversimplifying Lu Xun's motives and relegating non-nationalist sentiments to nationalism. I would like to argue that Lu Xun's efforts in translating for

a modern children's literature in China both mirrors and is in turn mirrored in the complexity and tortuousness of his intellectual struggles amidst the vicissitudes of the early twentieth century. In this paper, I divide Lu Xun's translations into three periods: the late Qing and early Republican period, the May Fourth period, and the post-May Fourth period. I hope to contribute, in a modest way, some thoughts on how Lu Xun's practice of translation fits in with the larger issue of cultivating children in modern China which, in turn, implicates, in an interestingly paradoxical fashion, the complexities of the intellectual rigors that have made him such an enduring and yet controversial figure in modern Chinese history (for the complexities of Lu Xun's thoughts, see, e.g., Qian Liqun and Wang Qiankun 80-82).

Behind Science Fiction: Evolutionary Thinking and Lu Xun's Individualistic Ethos

An important part of Lu Xun's translations during the late Qing and early Republican period comprises of literary works from oppressed eastern European countries and scientific stories such as the science fiction by Jules Verne (1828-1905). While his translation of science fiction was largely motivated by a social-Darwinist belief in evolutionary thinking, I contend that behind it was a literary and intellectual outlook too often ignored in research on Lu Xun's

translations—romantic individualism, although there is no lack of eminent scholarship on Lu Xun's romantic and individualistic impulses (see, e.g., Leo Ou-fan Lee; Qian Liqun). His oft-quoted “Moluo shili shuo” [On the Power of Mara Poetry] (1907), written during the same period when he studied in Japan (1902-1909), eulogizes the power of individual consciousness, advocating a starkly private stance vis-à-vis social and political institutional power. His appraisal of Mara Poetry stands as time-tested proof of his romantic extolment of the heroic individual loner who rebelled against conventions. Such romantic individualism, I would argue, lies behind his early translations of Verne's science fiction. The difference is that while Verne's philosophy is Darwinism, Lu Xun, like Yan Fu (1854-1921), moved on to Social Darwinism which, combined with his Nietzschean distrust of the masses, compelled him to place a society's hope for evolution on heroic individuals.

In a note to “Yuejie lvxing bianyan” [Preface to From the Earth to the Moon], Verne's works are introduced as combining scientific knowledge with fantastic imagination that were widely read and loved by children throughout the world (153). The story is a perfect example of how men's vision and determination can overcome grave obstacles and achieve what might appear to be impossible, a point that is demonstrated through a successful attempt of a moon-landing that launched three people in a projectile to the moon. To reinforce the heroic note, Lu Xun would quote from ancient Chinese poets such as Tao Yuanming (365-427) and invoke legendary Chinese tales in which seemingly impossible tasks were fulfilled. He would also, quite interestingly, add his own comments to sum up the gist of each chapter, stressing the formidability of the mission and the will of the heroes. As Mary Ann Farquhar so rightly points out, Lu Xun's poetic comments emphasize the heroic stature and vision of these men (49). *Didi lvxing* [Journey to the Center of the Earth], another Verne tale translated by Lu Xun, is about the adventures of Professor Hartwigg, an ambitious intellectual who, in order to explore the theory of the central fire, descends into the earth's interior center and pledges his determination to achieve his goal. He claims, Air, fire, and water are joining forces to stand in my way! All right, they'll find out what my will can do. I'll never give up, I won't retreat a fraction of an inch, and we'll see who wins out, man or nature!” (107). In

his free translation, Lu Xun would sometimes take away the technical details to avoid redundancy, but he would never grudge any opportunity to eulogize both the ambition of the protagonists and the power of scientific thought. The professor's rhetoric invoked above is again symptomatic of the discourse of evolution that guides the progress of human civilization in the continuing battle with nature. It is significant to note, however, that within the framework of the evolutionary discourse, it is the vision and intellect of daring individuals like Professor Hartwigg that have a great role to play.

Lu Xun at this point was keen on the idea of the liberation and autonomy of men, of the awakening of men's individual consciousness, and in particular, of the mental power and capacity of tenacious intellectuals. In another piece of translation, “Zaoren shu” [The Science of Man-Making], Lu Xun, in his typical manner, again lauded the scientist protagonist who persevered despite daunting obstacles to finally succeed in his man-making endeavor (95-97). His applaud of the figure of the intellectual, or more specifically the scientist in most cases, should not be considered as a mere coincidence. Rather, the prefatory remarks and acts of interventions, such as addition, on Lu Xun's part, could be interpreted as a conscious expression of his consistent intellectual belief. In “Wenhua pianzhi lun” [Cultural Bigotry] (1908), Lu Xun applauded Nietzsche as an outstanding example of individualism. Contrary to his commonly-portrayed later image as a fighter for the masses, Lu Xun at the time shared Nietzsche's distrust of the masses due largely to his pessimism about the dark sides of the human psyche. To some extent, the masses, the embodiment of history and traditions, were perceived as a suppressing force against the few creative geniuses. Indeed, as he transitioned from Darwinism to Social Darwinism, the young Lu Xun was well aware that whereas in the case of the former the forces of nature constituted a major source of obstacle in the evolution of human civilization, in the case of the latter the overwhelming effects of socio-cultural traditions (or “idols” in the Nietzschean sense) could threaten to deter the thinking and actions of creative individuals and eventually the progress and evolution of a society. Lu Xun was, therefore, quite alert to the reactionary forces of tradition that sought to preempt individualistic ethos.

When he translated Verne's stories, Lu Xun did

not specifically target children as the readership. Rather, his aim was to enlighten the Chinese people of a new nation in the making. Inasmuch as he readily perceived the link between childhood and nationhood, however, these translations also served as a prelude to a new children's literature that was to be formed in the Republican era; after all, the making of the new nation was entrusted, first and foremost, on the shoulders of children. In the appendix to the English translation of Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, a critic of Verne notes that it is the adventure novel that best lends itself to the spiritual transformation that characterizes the novel of initiation, and that "while the great Romantic novels have not been considered by the critics as initiatory works, those of Jules Verne have" (233). Indeed, the spirit of tenacity, the distrust of conventions, and the rebellion against orthodoxy—as demonstrated by the heroes in Lu Xun's early translations—reveal a romanticism that was later to characterize the May Fourth construction of the ideal childhood. Perceived as a group of people that were the least susceptible to cultural transmission, children during the May Fourth era were envisioned not only as citizens of an emerging Chinese nation but also as future citizens of the world community. This newfound awareness, I would argue, was in fact anticipated in the strategy Lu Xun used to translate Verne's stories. Although he was still following in the footsteps of late Qing translators in adopting "free translation," Lu Xun was making a conscious shift to vernacular Chinese as the language he used in those translations poses no difficulty to the modern reader. What I would like to stress here is the fact that Lu Xun had begun to adopt transliteration very frequently and almost consistently in rendering the names of people and places in Verne's stories, a strategy that gestured toward an entirely different translation method that was soon to become the subject of contention. Indeed, I see Lu Xun's employment of transliteration as anticipating his advocacy for literal translation and eventually "hard translation" which he became vocal in his later stage. The spirit of transliteration was to maintain the "foreignness" of the original, but more than that, it conveyed a sense of acknowledgment of people and places that existed outside of the spatial-temporal environments of the Middle Kingdom, to describe which the Chinese language needed to make compromises even at the expense of distorting itself.

It conveyed the recognition of the inadequacy of the language itself in the process of meaning-making, and as such, threw into sharp relief the awareness of the place in which China found itself in the modern world and of the wider cosmological order in which the nation needed to adapt in order to survive. The world dimension, as I hope to show in the following part, was fore-grounded in the May Fourth period, a period of rising nationalism which nevertheless curiously embraced a spirit of cosmopolitanism that made its impact felt in the making of the national child.

The May Fourth Period: Cosmopolitan Yearnings and the Translation of Fairy Tales

Lu Xun's name has been forever associated with the transformation of Chinese national character—an endeavor that reached its peak in the May Fourth period³, broadly construed as covering the time span between 1915 and 1927 when both salvation and enlightenment commanded the utmost urgency. Whereas his nationalism was underscored by deep romantic and individualistic ethos in the earlier period, I juxtapose Lu Xun's nationalism against his cosmopolitan aspirations in the May Fourth period. I see Lu Xun's cosmopolitanism as an extension and continuation of his romantic impulse, as it was frequently tempered by transcendental, utopian notes. I investigate Lu Xun's translations of fairy tales, notably those authored by Vasili Eroshenko (1889-1950) and Frederik Van Eeden (1860-1932). I maintain that during the May Fourth period, the fairy tale—as a newly imported genre that crystallized the romantic extolment of the purity and innocence of a child's heart—registered a deep longing for reconstituting the adult world and for constructing an ideal cosmopolitan order in which peace, equality, and harmony prevail over war and brutality.

The blind poet Eroshenko came into Lu Xun's acquaintance when the former came to Beijing and lived under the same roof with the Zhou brothers. Between 1921 and 1922, Lu Xun translated some selected stories of Eroshenko which were compiled into *Ailuo xianke tonghua ji* [A Collection of Fairy Tales by Eroshenko], along with a play entitled *Tao se de yun* [Peach-colored Clouds]. In his preface to the collection of fairy tales, Lu Xun wrote, "To me, what the author intends to call for is a universal love between all men.... I do not want the author to ever wish to

leave his dream of childlike beauty but to continue to beckon men towards it" (197). During his stay, Eroshenko, a self-proclaimed cosmopolitan, taught Esperanto in Peking University where the President Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) vigorously promoted the language. What these intellectuals championed, alongside the language, was the spirit that informed it—the moral cosmopolitan message of love and understanding that corresponded to the general intellectual atmosphere in the aftermath of World War I. Needless to say, the sincerity and innocence of a child's heart, as noted frequently by Lu Xun, stood in sharp contrast to the dismal realities of war and suffering that China was subjected to in the first decades of the twentieth century. The childlike dream thus provided the transcendental counterbalance to the evils and oppression which had become routine in the adult world.

Even when his footsteps were found in a number of Asian nations mourning under imperial rule, Eroshenko was open-minded and farsighted enough to criticize the cultural nationalism of certain Asian countries such as India. When reading Eroshenko's fairy tales, we need to pay attention to the symbolic and metaphoric overtones underlying the stories. Take "Xia de long" [A Narrow Cage], for example. The tale is about a Bengal tiger tired of its life in a narrow cage and dreamt of obtaining freedom in the wider world only to discover that the human world was also, sadly, a narrow cage in which cultural rituals robbed people of life and freedom. Although the criticism seems to be directed against the evil Indian practice of widow-burning, which was banned by British colonizers according to a note provided by Lu Xun, its significance reaches far beyond that if we read it alongside the enlightenment endeavor in China and other colonized nations. As Jones perceptively notes in a revealing paragraph, "In condemning what he sees as the relativizing exceptionalism of cultural nationalism, Lu Xun implies that one's own national character is as much a 'narrow cage' as colonialism itself" (171). Interestingly, Lu Xun, who first embraced Eroshenko to arouse hatred against those in power, the hatred of the colonized against the imperialist powers, eventually found his nationalist sentiments turned inward, resulting in a sharp, lucid critique against nationalism's own limitations.

The significance of the tale, however, goes beyond mere critiques of nationalism. It addresses

the universal human dilemma of being encaged, as seen through the tiger's eyes: "For the first time he could clearly see that humankind is imprisoned by an invisible cage, one that even the strongest men could not break open" (185). In the afterword to his translation, Lu Xun, in a manner characteristic of him, once again defended Eroshenko's humanist and anti-nationalistic stance by eulogizing his pure, child-like heart (199-200). Eroshenko, Lu Xun wrote, "only has a childish, and yet beautiful, pure heart; boundaries of the human world cannot limit his dreams and fantasies" (199). The heart of a newborn child knows no boundaries imposed by either socio-cultural traditions or political and ideological stances; it is an unbiased heart that registers the best hope for salvaging humanity from the narrow nationalist cage. Lu Xun's deep-seated admiration for Eroshenko was in fact partly enabled by his own romantic and humanist stance—which found expression in his translated work "Yige qingnian de meng" [The Dream of a Youth], authored by the humanistic Japanese writer Saneatsu Mushanokōji (1885-1976) who propagated the idea of the New Village as an ultimate solution to human inequalities. Indeed, Lu Xun's own infatuation with the human condition brought him closer to Eroshenko, whose tales are almost always endowed with a deeper and broader concern with the fate of humanity and an admirable openness in approaching its multifaceted dilemmas. In "Wei renlei" [For the Sake of Humanity], a tale which shifts between reality and fantasy, Eroshenko again showed an understanding of science and of human problems that carried a universal significance as he questioned issues surrounding scientific progress, morality, and the future of humanity. Blindness in his case seemed to have enabled the poet to gain an insight not usually bequeathed to those who were able to see the world through their eyes.

In a postscript to "Yu de bei'ai" [The Sadness of Fish], Lu Xun relates the theme of this piece to Frederik Van Eeden's "De Kleine Johannes" [Little Johannes] which he translated into Chinese two decades after he first became acquainted with it. The story, classified by Andrew Lang (1844-1912) as a typical *modern* piece of fairy tale for children, narrates the life stories of little Johannes as he was growing up and brought to face the harsh realities of the world. Lu Xun, however, saw it as a fairy tale not only for children but for adults as well, as he thought highly

of the story's social and philosophical implications with the plotlines touching upon the pitiable human condition and the evils rampant in this world. An intellectually curious kid, little Johannes fumbled his way through times of despair and grave uncertainties. Still, he did not give up hope. Even when life seemed to present darkness all around him, he continued groping along, albeit not without inner struggle. Growing up in one of the darkest times in the Chinese history, Lu Xun was certainly able to identify with the struggle little Johannes underwent and the difficult road he traversed. Eventually, little Johannes was summoned to "the great dismal town where men are, and their misery" (Eeden, ch. 7). He was, as we may conclude, initiated into the real world and brought to the realization that the meaning of life lied ultimately in serving the greater good of his fellow men. Such a philosophy or ethic, pursued by the author himself, resonated deeply with Lu Xun and other progressive intellectuals in post-WWI China who aspired to an equal and just world. The moral cosmopolitan message carried in the theme reflected a trend toward cosmopolitan socialism with which both Van Eeden and Lu Xun had some affinities in their respective social contexts. The former indeed sought to practice the spirit of cosmopolitanism by establishing, in his native Holland, a commune named Walden, where the people shared everything in common. Van Eeden's cosmopolitan message, however, could also have been partly informed by his associations with anarchism as testified by his friendship with the famous Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) who, apart from leaving a noticeable imprint on Chinese anarchism in the early twentieth century, also influenced the anarchist thinking of both Lu Xun and his younger brother Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967). Lu Xun's cosmopolitanism is thus blended with both socialist and anarchist strains of thought, and is, as could not be stressed enough, deeply moral.

Post-May Fourth Period: Marxism, Revolution, and Lu Xun's Reservations

The change of socio-political tide set in motion in the mid-to-late 1920s exerted a noticeable though incremental impact on Lu Xun's choice of foreign authors. Especially after the onset of the White Terror in 1927, Lu Xun found himself increasingly drawn to Russian writers and Marxist thinkers. Pre-

cisely because of this shift of interest, Lu Xun has been constantly described as the major spokesman and theorist of the revolutionary school of children's literature, and his translations during this period have also been characterized as being decidedly Marxist in nature, with the purpose of remaking children into future revolutionaries (see, e.g., Wang Quangen 64-65; Farquhar 143). It is commonly believed that while his translation of *Little Johannes* marks a turning point in the social implications of the fairy tale (Farquhar 45), his *Xiao Bide* [Little Peter] (1929) and *Biao* [The Watch] (1935) represent the direction in which class-conscious children's literature in modern China was to develop. While it is indisputable that Lu Xun did make a turn toward children's literature that laid bare questions of class and social injustice, I hope to call attention to the fact that unlike the staunch Marxist adherents, Lu Xun was able to keep a critical distance from Marxism as espoused by the communists and at the same time recognize both the use and the limited use of literature, quite unlike his romantic contemporaries who vehemently advocated revolutionary literature. In an article where he elaborated on the class nature of literature, Lu Xun paradoxically had in mind the image of the lone translator: "I stole fire from abroad to cook my own flesh. I had hoped that if the taste proved adequate, others might benefit more and my sacrifice would not have been completely wasted" (221-22). By involving the figure of the translator in the cannibalistic torment in his reworking of the Prometheus myth, Lu Xun made a strategic link between translation practice and the national cause, underlining not only the translator's suffering and his critical role in the historical nightmare but, more importantly, the translator's willingness for rigorous self-torture and sacrifice in the service of the masses. In so doing, Lu Xun established the dichotomy between the heroic translator and the consuming masses, thereby expressing strong reservations about the Marxist cause.

Little Peter, authored by the Hungarian socialist writer Hermynia zur Meuhlen (1883-1951), is about the life and the world of a proletarian child. Lying in bed with a broken ankle, he listens to the accounts of stories by the most mundane objects in his room, all of which assumed personalities and were able to tell stories that carried both moral and social implications. For instance, the coal recounts the life of the rich and the poor in the mines; the bottle depicts

exploiting, devil-like capitalists; and the kettle compares the luxurious life of a wealthy family with the meager existence of a poor one. As the story points to themes of class struggle, the divide between the rich and the poor, the grim realities facing the working class, and the cruelties of landlords and capitalists, the translated version of *Little Peter* is thus also easily seen as an important piece of revolutionary literature, regarded even as one of the precursors of the large bulk of revolutionary literature that appeared in China in the 1930s.

Lu Xun, however, made a strategic intervention in his preface that, in my opinion, fundamentally questioned the nature and character of this proletarian story as it was transplanted into the Chinese soil. The author, Lu Xun pointed out, intended *Little Peter* as a piece of story for proletarian children. When it was translated into Chinese, Lu Xun wrote, the readership of the story also changed. It was not intended for workers' children any more:

The primary reason is that workers' children have not had the privilege to be educated in China. They are not acquainted with either the characters or the formats of the essays. The story thus has nothing to do with them, not to mention that these children have neither the money to buy books nor the leisure of time to read them. ("Xiao Bide xuyan" 238)

Even educated children in China, Lu Xun reckoned, would not be able to identify with the background and the objects in the story (238). Such comments indicate that unlike the author, Lu Xun did not translate for proletarian children, nor was his intention to raise the awareness of workers' children in the struggle against the capitalists or the evil social system as mainstream scholarship on children's literature would have it. The revolutionary nature of the original story was much undermined when Lu Xun stated that the translated story was for "adults who have not lost their innocent heart, those who empathize with the working masses, or those who demonstrate an interest in world literature" (239-40). It is clear, therefore, that unlike the feverish revolutionary writers of his time, Lu Xun recognized not only the limited use of literature in the proletariat revolutionary cause but also the distance between literature and revolution, never placing too much hope for literature to play a

central role in the cause of revolution.

Indeed, Lu Xun's translations might have inspired writers of revolutionary literature; it does not mean, however, that Lu Xun himself believed firmly in the revolutionary aim of his work. Lu Xun's translation of *The Watch* tells the adventures of a homeless child by the name of Petika who before being sent to a juvenile home, led a miserable, famished life on the streets. After being caught stealing bread, he was sent to prison, where he contemplated stealing the gold watch of a drunken fellow prisoner. The story thus revolves around Petika's thoughts and actions regarding the gold watch, which stood as the symbol of wealth and fortune, offering possibilities toward freedom and a better life. In the end, however, after spending some time in the juvenile home, Petika felt ashamed with the watch tucked away in his pocket, and he eventually returned the watch to its owner. In his preface, Lu Xun recognized the social relevance of the story. In his mind, how children grow up and what they grow up to be has much to do with both their immediate and the larger social environments. Behind the popularity of this translated story were the vision and the will to change the Chinese society into one in which children could be educated properly. It was his belief that children should be exposed to social realities and face them as they were (394-98). Nevertheless, Lu Xun's own preface suggests that when he translated the story, he did not necessarily have in mind a Marxist path or solution to social problems. As such, the political ramifications of the translated tale as interpreted by Marxist-oriented scholars should also be subjected to close scrutiny. Having said that, we must recognize that Lu Xun during this period did reject the earlier idea of the romantic child partly predicated on his evolutionary beliefs, and that his translational endeavor did go a long way toward entrusting children's literature with a self-aware social and educational function which has since been neatly appropriated in the discourse of class struggle in the decades that followed.

Conclusion

Since the Republican era, children's literature and its translation—with Lu Xun as the forefather—have been constantly associated with the nationalist, revolutionary paradigm. I would argue that neither nationalism nor revolution is adequate for a nuanced understanding of Lu Xun's endeavor in children's

literature translation, which I believe serves as an entry point into the development and trajectory of his complex intellectual thoughts. Even though Lu Xun is constantly portrayed as a political writer who pioneered modern Chinese realism, there was always an unambiguous private stance lurking behind his political façade, a stance that was underpinned by a deep romantic individualism; even though he is regarded as the foremost nationalist-minded modern writer, Lu Xun still cherished romantic utopian dreams that enabled the message of cosmopolitanism to be heard; even as Marxism and revolutionary literature commanded the enthusiasm of his contemporaries, Lu Xun was sober-minded enough to maintain a critical distance that enabled him to both recognize the limited use of literature and express reservations about the Marxist cause. Paradoxically, children's literature, as a marginal literary genre, mirrors Lu Xun's decades-long intellectual struggles in ways just as significant as his fiction writing, prose poetry, and critical essays for which he has been most celebrated.



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¹ When he translated Verne's two stories, Lu Xun did not seem to realize that they were from the same author. He introduced Verne as an American author in his translation of *From the Earth to the Moon* and as a British author in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

² Eroshenko's despise for nationalism was such that during his stay in Beijing, he called out for a peaceful world without the boundaries of nations. He even declared on one occasion that "my country is the world, my nation is humankind, and my beloved national language is Esperanto" (*Chenbao fujian* [Morning Supplement]. Dec. 11, 1922). The translation is my own.

³ in the narrowest sense, the May Fourth refers to the patriotic political mobilizations on May 4th, 1919. Scholars' definitions of the May Fourth period vary. its starting point is usually placed on either 1915 with the initiation of *Qingnian zazhi* (Youth Magazine), later changed to *Xin Qingnian* (New Youth) which is pro-science and democracy, or 1917 when Chinese intellectuals started to turn increasingly revolutionary with the influence of the Russian revolution. Its ending point is sometimes considered to be 1923 with the outbreak of the debate on science, or 1925 with the May 30th violence, or sometimes 1927 with the outbreak of the White Terror.

The Image of China in *Red Scarf Girl*: Promoting International Understanding or Reinforcing Western Hegemony?

Xu Xu

A German Jew, journalist Jella Lepman, fled Germany during World War II. After she returned to Germany, Lepman decided to use children's literature to promote intercultural understanding in order to prevent such a devastating reoccurrence as the Nazi Holocaust (Freeman and Lehman 6). Lepman founded the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) in 1953 with the aim to promote children's literature and international understanding worldwide. Promoting international understanding through children's books is also stated as IBBY's central mission on its website. Kathy G. Short points out that "Building international understanding through children's and adolescent literature has always been at the heart of IBBY" (1).

The promotion of intercultural understanding is thus generally understood to be an important goal of international children's literature. But the centrality of this goal and the ways in which writers work to achieve or to subvert it ought to be problematized in any consideration of this literature. In "Internationalism, the Universal Child and the World of Children's Literature," Emer O'Sullivan questions the "international" nature of international children's literature, arguing that this literature is, in fact, dominated by books from Great Britain and the United States. Similarly, Christina M. Desai also finds that in the United States there is "limited availability of [children's] books from abroad and a limited vision of the world beyond U.S. borders" (42). Based on a sample of approximately 150 international children's book

titles published in the US, Desai concludes that the books available in this market only echo mainstream U.S. assumptions about foreign cultures. For example, books about African cultures are often set in villages and foreground the idea of poverty, and books that deal with the strife of war and political oppression are usually set in Asia/Middle East—in countries such as Afghanistan, Israel, and Iraq. The present article builds on the previous studies that question the internationalism of international children's literature by further elucidating the ideological underpinnings of such literature that contradict its goal of promoting cross-cultural understanding, and it does so by taking Ji-li Jiang's *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution* as its sample text.

In *Global Perspectives in Children's Literature*, Evelyn Freeman and Barbara Lehman define international children's literature as encompassing books published first in countries other than the United States and as "books written by immigrants to the United States about their home countries and published in the United States" (10). Ji-li Jiang's *Red Scarf Girl* is listed as a representative text in the latter category. The memoir's central narrative is an account of the author's childhood experiences during the first two years of the Cultural Revolution. In 1966, at the beginning of the revolution, Ji-li was a twelve-year-old school girl from a well-off family in Shanghai. Actively involved in the political movement, Ji-li strove to become a model revolutionary by answering Chairman Mao's call to destroy feudalism and capitalism and, thus, safeguard the proletarian cause. However, over time, Ji-li came to realize that she was perceived by the outside world as a counterrevolutionary because of her family's material wealth and its class status as the "landlord class." As her family was politically persecuted, Ji-li became disillusioned with the movement and finally formed a new sense of self defined by responsibility to her family.

Written originally in English by a Chinese immigrant, *Red Scarf Girl* was first published in the United States in 1997 and is still read today in a U.S. context in which international Chinese children's books are scarce. It is one of the most popular and academically acclaimed international children's books about Chinese culture available to U.S. readers. In fact, the book received numerous prestigious awards: 1998 Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association), Best Books of 1997

(Publishers Weekly), 1997 Books for Youth Editors' Choice (American Library Association Booklist), and 1997 Notable Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies (National Council for the Social Studies and Children's Book Council). In the US, *Red Scarf Girl* is often recommended as a positive international children's book about Chinese culture, although the reasons it is recommended as such vary considerably. Pat Heine et al., for example, celebrate the book as a powerful autobiography featuring a positive female role model. Elisabeth Fieldstone Kanner argues that by exploring *Red Scarf Girl* students can gain an awareness of universal themes of prejudice and discrimination. As *Red Scarf Girl* is marketed as a memoir, readers may take its historical "truthfulness" for granted. However, Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer see nonfiction as "sharing many of the qualities of fictional narrative," for "in the process of conveying factual information about science or history, nonfictional texts can and do easily reinforce ideological assumptions about individuals and society" (129). The present article suggests that rather than challenging Western mainstream ideology, *Red Scarf Girl* reinforces the binary notion of a despotic and backward China versus a free and civilized America that is fundamental to Western imperialism.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that Western representations of the "Orient" create a dichotomy between the West and its "other," a dichotomy that represents the Orient as "underhumanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric" (150), and inferior and the West as civilized, educated, democratic, and superior. Such a dichotomy is a central mechanism by which the West maintains and extends its hegemony over other nations. In the Western tradition, what is usually conceived about China is "the association of China not with an ordered space but with a space without any conceivable arrangement or coherence, a space that makes any logical ordering utterly unthinkable" (Zhang 110). China represents "a Western fantasy of the Other" and "the monstrous unreason and its alarming subversion of Western thinking" (Zhang 110). The Chinese Cultural Revolution, usually perceived as the "biggest non-wartime, concentrated social upheaval in world history" (Clark 1), easily conjures up this orientalist image of China as "disordered," "illogical," and "monstrously unreasonable." This article argues that *Red Scarf Girl* reifies this orientalist discourse about China through its framing

sections but it also suggests a reading beyond the orientalist view of China by employing a historically grounded perspective in the central narrative.

Red Scarf Girl's central narrative is framed by a prologue and an epilogue, both of which are narrated by the adult Ji-li looking back at her childhood. In the brief prologue, the narrator states that she had led a successful and happy life until 1966, the "fateful" year in which the Cultural Revolution began. With historical hindsight, the adult narrator in the prologue sets up a dichotomy between her "normal" life before 1966 and her "abnormal" life in the throes of the "retrogressive" Cultural Revolution. Thus, even before readers engage with the central narrative of the memoir, they are instructed as to how the story is to be interpreted. That is, the narrative should be read as a digression from the normal. Framed as an instance of Chinese despotism and cruelty—the kind of reading reinforced by the epilogue as I will discuss later—the central narrative nevertheless invites a historically situated reading that foregrounds the child's agency and resists the problematic and simplistic framing of the past as testimony of an inhuman and anti-democratic China.

Unlike the prologue, the central narrative employs the perspective of a girl growing up during the Cultural Revolution who is torn between a desire to embody Chairman Mao's ideal child and the reality of her family's counterrevolutionary status. In the central narrative, Ji-li is represented as a historically situated agent whose subject position is produced through the dominant nationalist discourse of Chairman Mao's ideal child and of voices countering this discourse. In 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC), also dubbed "New China," was founded under the leadership of Mao Zedong, a significant event that marks the beginning of the nation-state's socialist construction and of its fashioning of a corresponding national identity. The creation of "New China" requires a continuous battle against feudalism, imperialism, and capitalism—that is, of the ideologies that characterized the pre-1949 Old China. For Chinese communists of the time, the proletarian revolution was incomplete and the construction of the nation had only just begun. Thus in the 1950s and 1960s, the newly founded socialist nation-state conducted a series of mass campaigns aimed at eradicating feudal, capitalist, and imperialist ideologies and practices. And this nation-building project cul-

minated in the Proletarian Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. I argue in the article "Chairman Mao's Child": *Sparkling Red Star* and the Construction of Children in the Chinese Cultural Revolution" that the fashioning of the socialist nation-state during the period was intricately intertwined with the production of an ideal proletarian child. Although the ideal child is an officially valorized political subject, he or she is not simply a receptacle of adult indoctrination. The training of the child subject in service to the nation-building project does not aim to produce children who are exact copies of adult revolutionaries but rather child revolutionaries with their own "special characteristics"—such as pluck, creativity, perseverance, and altruism—crucial to the success of the proletarian cause (Xu 398). The ideal Chairman Mao's child possesses the kind of revolutionary zeal and agency that adults are viewed as lacking. This ideal proletarian child during the Cultural Revolution actively performs his or her revolutionary identity according to the cultural and political script of the time.

In *Red Scarf Girl*, Jia Hong-yu, for example, the most famous Red Guard leader in Ji-li's district, is depicted as epitomizing the ideal proletarian child. Jia Hong-yu leads a group of Red Guards on a fifteen-day march into the countryside to spread the word about the Cultural Revolution and establish revolutionary ties across the country. That Jia Hong-yu overcomes various difficulties she encounters on the long and arduous journey demonstrates the revolutionary qualities of perseverance and endurance. In addition, she prioritizes the revolution over personal matters, a choice that shows her quality of altruism. For example, Jia Hong-yu is very much needed at home because her mother is sick. However, she believes that to stay with her mother would mean "adopting an individualist line" (105). And, further, Jia Hong-yu is determined to give every drop of blood to "work to liberate all of mankind" (108). Jia Hong-yu's exemplary status as Chairman Mao's Child is symbolized by her meeting with Chairman Mao at the Tian An'men Square. This ideal proletarian child greatly inspires the child Ji-li, who is trying hard to embody the ideal child.

For example, the national(ist) imperative of eradicating "old" ideologies and practices is illustrated in the book by the "Destroy the Four Olds" campaign during the Cultural Revolution whereby "old

ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits” (21), the remnants of Old China inhibiting the progress of New China, are to be sought out and destroyed. Even as a child, Ji-li has a clear understanding of the campaign’s importance: “Chairman Mao told us we would never succeed at building a strong socialist country until we destroyed the ‘Four Olds’ and established the ‘Four News’” (21). For instance, in the book, a thriving food store bearing the name of “the Great Prosperity Market” falls victim to this ideology. Considering the store a bastion of capitalist exploitation, revolutionaries take an axe to its wooden sign. This action is witnessed by a group of bystanders, all of whom, including Ji-li, cheer the revolutionaries on. Inspired by what they have seen, Ji-li and her friend try out a new activity as they make their way home whereby they identify shop names of the same ilk and confidently criticize them for class exploitation. The children are “proud” of themselves, for they “were certain” they were “bringing a new life to China” (25). Having witnessed the axing of the store’s sign as an action aimed to further the “Destroy the Four Olds Movement,” Ji-li is happy to reenact the movement in the domestic sphere. For example, Ji-li’s grandmother has held on to some clothes, including some gowns that once belonged to her ancestors. But as they signify a feudalist life style, they must be destroyed. Ji-li consoles her grandmother, “It is pretty, Grandma.... but it is fourolds. Don’t feel bad about it” (97). In this scene, Ji-li functions as a forward-looking child who embodies China’s bright future, whereas her grandmother functions as a representative of Old China clinging to a past that must be eradicated.

Throughout the central narrative, Ji-li strives to emulate the ideal proletarian child and to claim her own revolutionary agency. Ji-li’s revolutionary endeavor is, however, repeatedly thwarted by her family’s “black” class status. Her grandfather is labeled a “landlord,” her father a “counterrevolutionary,” and her mother a “counterrevolutionary sympathizer.” Subject to occasional verbal harassment from her peers, Ji-li is ashamed of her family for “exploiting” the poor and standing in the way of the proletarian cause. And, in terms of her own identity, she resents them for preventing her from becoming a revolutionary role model. Under such unfavorable conditions, Ji-li must work harder to emulate the ideal proletarian subject, such that when a newspaper article

reveals the enormous wealth her family once possessed, she feels a burst of anger: “Didn’t they know how hard I’d been working to overcome my family background?” (211). Ji-li decides to use the class education exhibition as an opportunity to win her honor back. Working as a guide whose job it is to represent her class at the exhibition, Ji-li ably reveals the ways in which the landlord class oppressed the peasants in Old China. Ji-li’s emotional presentation deeply touches the audience, including Chairman Jin, the head of the school, who praises her impressive performance.

Despite Ji-li’s proof of her revolutionary royalty, her family still poses a threat to her revolutionary identity. But Ji-li is ultimately a child of New China—not only a child of her biological parents but also a child of the nation’s father Chairman Mao. After the class exhibition, a man from Ji-li’s father’s work unit visits her at school and asks her to testify against her father at a struggle meeting. Although her family’s “black” class status acts as an obstruction to her revolutionary achievement, Ji-li does have the option of cutting herself off from her family in order to take on the identity of an “educable child” (224). By aligning herself with the exploited class and condemning her own family, Ji-li can prove herself to be “truly Chairman Mao’s child” (225). In the end, however, Ji-li does not testify against her father. Nor does she give up her revolutionary ideals. She refuses to give her father up at the meeting. Further, she decides to do her summer labor in the countryside rather than the city in order to remold herself more completely. Ji-li’s childhood story ends when she returns from the countryside to rejoin her family in the city. Having seen her weak grandmother laboriously sweeping up trash in the neighborhood and her sick mother lying helplessly on a straw mat, Ji-li realizes that she has a responsibility to protect her family.

Thus, Ji-li’s childhood story ends in ambiguity. Despite her determination to take care of her family, the child narrator never indicates that she intends to entirely relinquish her goal of becoming the valorized proletarian agent. The conflict between her family’s black class status and the revolutionary cause remains unresolved until the epilogue. Speaking in an authoritative tone, the adult narrator in the epilogue negates the child narrator’s historical perspective by constructing the adult narrator’s reflection as the truth:

We finally learned that the whole Cultural Revolution had been part of a power struggle at the highest levels of the party. Our leader had taken advantage of our trust and loyalty to manipulate the whole country. This is the most frightening lesson of the Cultural Revolution: Without a sound legal system, a small group or even a single person can take control of an entire country. This is as true now as it was then. (266)

Rather than viewing her childhood subjectivity as historically and culturally constituted, the adult narrator simply sees the historically produced child as “brainwashed” (265) and simultaneously establishes the adult narrator’s reflection as historically and geographically transcendental “truth.” The child’s historically specific construction of her own identity is thus misread as the Chinese dictator’s manipulation of an innocent child. As the adult narrator of the epilogue states, “After thinking so much about that time, I wanted to do something for the little girl I had been, and for all the children who lost their childhoods as I did. This book is the result” (266). The adult Ji-li further suggests in the epilogue that her childhood self had been “deceived” by power-hungry Party leaders. However, the child’s sense of identity cannot be explained retrospectively by her “stupidity” of “being fooled by a despotic dictator.” As a child, Ji-li’s active enactment of and negotiation with the nationalist discourse of Chairman Mao’s child and its counter discourses is an indication of her revolutionary agency, not simply the result of the Party’s indoctrination of an innocent and passive child, as suggested earlier. Ji-li’s childhood pursuit of a revolutionary identity attests to her agency “understood as culturally and historically produced rather than as universally and historically stable” (Xu 382). In the historical context of the Cultural Revolution, agency is deeply intertwined with the hegemonic political system (Xu 383). While Ji-li is performing the political norm of the time, the working of the norm also entails the subject’s own active enactment of the norm and performing it as her own.

Viewed from the adult’s perspective in the epilogue, the Cultural Revolution is no more than an instance of China’s irrationality and backwardness, an orientalist discourse deeply entrenched in the Western imagination of China. The theme of the

child’s construction of her own revolutionary identity is overshadowed by dramatic and traumatic events succeeding one another—including the Red Guards cutting up people’s clothes and shoes and ransacking the houses of those considered to be class enemies; students making posters criticizing their teachers’ revisionism; and those identified as counterrevolutionaries or reactionaries locked up in jail, driven to suicide, or made to undergo public humiliation, for example, by wearing signs bearing statements such as “I am a reactionary monster” (141). The central narrative is stripped of its historical situatedness and thematic complexity and is read as an example of China’s violence and cruelty. In this light, China becomes a spectacle wet with the possible condemnation of international audiences. Using the example of the West’s responses to the 1989 Tian An’men Square Protests, Rey Chow forcefully argues that China, “as the site of the ‘raw’ material that is ‘monstrosity,’ is produced for the surplus-value of spectacle, entertainment, and spiritual enrichment for the ‘First World’” (84). Similarly, the ruthless atrocity and monstrosity of the Cultural Revolution vividly depicted in *Red Scarf Girl* simultaneously repels and entertains Western readers and affirms their moral superiority.

Furthermore, in the epilogue, the adult narrator tells a familiar immigration story that constructs a dichotomy between a backward and oppressive China and a free and democratic America:

After all the experiences I have told about in this story, and many more painful and frustrating experiences afterwards, I left China and moved to the United States in 1984. I was thirty years old. I started at the bottom. I had no money, no friends, and hardly any English. I was willing to take on the struggle to establish myself in a new country because I knew that was the price I would have to pay for the freedom to think, speak, and write whatever I pleased. (270–1)

In China, no matter how hard she tried, Ji-li failed to fulfill her dreams—whether that of becoming an ideal child of Chairman Mao, a Liberation Army Solider, or a member of the Red Guard. However, America is a place of golden opportunity where she can succeed as long as she has ambition and perseverance. The

above passage draws on the mainstream American notion of the self-made man—a notion “permeated by the desire to escape history, to transcend the historical realities of time, place, and human limitation” (Tyson 306). The notion of the self-made man obscures the reality that most of the impoverished in America, just as elsewhere, did not become successful (Langston 119); that human rights were limited to whites, as Charles Mills incisively argues in *The Racial Contract*; and that American immigration exclusion acts restricted and regulated the possibilities of Asian American settlement and cultural expression, as Lisa Lowe argues in *Immigrant Acts*. The tension between the patriotic duty of building New China and the family responsibility of protecting the politically condemned as experienced by Ji-li is finally resolved in the epilogue, in which readers are told that Ji-li’s whole family, including her siblings and their families, now live in the United States. Her parents even live with Ji-li’s sister and their two grandsons. It is worth noting, too, that Ji-li’s father resumed his acting career he was forced to abandon during the Cultural Revolution because he was identified as a counterrevolutionary. This warm and happy picture of family life and individual fulfillment in the United States is in sharp contrast to the heartrending image of a broken and desperate family and the repression of personal desires in China. Finally, the national imperative of revolutionary altruism required in China gives way to the liberal individualism valorized in the United States.

Framed by the prologue and epilogue, the story of *Red Scarf Girl*, therefore, is one which echoes an orientalist discourse about China. Namely, China is represented as the despotic, ruthless, and collectivistic Other in stark contrast to the Self represented by the free, democratic, and individualistic West. Instead of crossing national borders, then, *Red Scarf Girl* reinforces the binary relationship of East and West that underlies Western imperialism. There is no denying that Ji-li and her family experienced unjust persecution during the Cultural Revolution. But the book fails to see the historical contingency of subjective constitution and to situate the political movement within the continuous history of China’s modernization. There is also no denying that China’s modernization and nationalization is accompanied by the internal oppression and subjection of the Chinese people. However, the book

frames this process as an instance of China’s despotism in contrast to the morally and politically superior West. If *Red Scarf Girl* were published in China for a Chinese audience, it could function as a powerful critique of the violence of the nation-building project. But given that the book was specifically written for a Western audience and originally published in the United States, the ideological function the book performs in the Western context is exactly the opposite. That is, this book can be used to reinforce the orientalist discourse and strengthen Western hegemony over the Other.

In “Asian American Autobiography for Children: Critical Paradigms and Creative Practice,” Rocio Davis suggests that although some Asian American autobiographies primarily focus on the protagonist’s pre-immigration life, historical events also take center stage in these works. She argues that “writers like ... Ji-li Jiang ... produce texts that also teach history, particularly Asian history of the twentieth century, which most children in the United States do not have access to in the current school curriculum” (190). But what *Red Scarf Girl* teaches American readers is not really “global consciousness” as the book is understood as promoting. On the contrary, the book teaches China’s totalitarianism and backwardness and the superiority of American freedom and democracy, a contrast that undergirds Orientalism as a Western product to sustain its superiority in the world. The universal “truth” the adult narrator has come to firmly believe in turns out to be an orientalist discourse that excludes and illegitimizes other voices such as that of the child. This case study of *Red Scarf Girl*, thus, points to an important question that scholars, teachers, or indeed anyone interested in international children’s literature should ask. That is, what ideological function does an international children’s book perform in the recipient culture? Without examining this question, the use to which international children’s literature is put might run counter to the goal of fostering international understanding and closing cultural gaps. But as discussed earlier, the central narrative of *Red Scarf Girl* does paradoxically suggest a reading beyond an orientalist view of China by employing a child’s perspective grounded in the historical context. The text thus provides readers with a good opportunity to read critically—“against the grain.” In order to counter the orientalist undercurrent in the text, readers should

take a historical perspective that values the child as a historical agent and acknowledges the historical contingency of subjectivity, and they should question the adult narrator's reflection on the child's experiences as the only legitimate truth of the past.

The analysis of *Red Scarf Girl* also reflects a larger problem in international children's literature. Namely, so-called "international" children's books available to Western readers tend to reinforce cultural assumptions and stereotypes Western readers have already held about non-Western countries, especially those conventionally viewed as ideologically opposed to the West. Desai argues that U.S. publishers publish what will sell, and what will sell unfortunately tends to be those reflecting cultural assumptions American children are familiar with. Many international books are thus "indistinguishable from books originating in the U.S." (Desai 48). Desai observes that children's books about underdeveloped/developing cultures usually foreground issues of poverty and political oppression seen as abnormalities in the lives of Western children, as mentioned at the beginning, whereas books from or about developed Western countries including Europe, Australia, and New Zealand portray characters and lifestyles similar to those in the US. Desai thus concludes, "The overall picture, then, is of a familiar, homogeneous western world contrasted with a very different world beyond, emphasizing both geographic and cultural distances" (48). This dichotomy is exactly what Ji-li Jiang's *Red Scarf Girl* reinforces, though it also opens up a possibility of reading against it. Thus, the case study of *Red Scarf Girl* points to a need for international children's literature available in the West to expand and diversify in order to render this literature not merely a reflection of the Self but a microcosm of a truly heterogeneous world.



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African history from the inside out! Jenny Robson has written many novels about Africa today and some of an Africa in the future. In *Granite*, she goes back in time to the vast stone question mark which is Great Zimbabwe (here called Zimba Remabwe). Its mighty king sends travelers north to contact the Christians who were said to build cathedrals. So this is medieval Africa reaching out. Mokomba, an African boy, recalls what happened on that strange journey. At the request of his friend, the Egyptian Shafiq, their joint memories are written down. A voyage into discovery with much to be feared, returning not with riches but with something else. In these pages could indeed lie the story of the collapse of a kingdom – but we can never be sure. *Granite* is an exciting story, though also a sad one. It will reward thoughtful readers who enjoy puzzling over the mysteries of history.

Jay Heale



BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Granite

Jenny Robson

Cape Town: Tafelberg,

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Fiction; ages 11+



The Image of Faithful Frogs and Titillated Toads: The Human and Animal Hierarchy in Victorian Fairy Tale Adaptations

Victoria Tedeschi

In the nineteenth century, natural scientists, paleontologists, and philosophers increasingly began to scrutinize the boundary between humankind and the animal kingdom. Darwin's theory of natural selection contributed to the erosion of this hierarchical divide. By positing that humans evolved from a prior progenitor, Darwin's controversial theory emphasized similarities between human and animal and simultaneously threatened humankind's superior status that Christianity had prescribed.

For an age so greatly fascinated by the fantastical, fairy tales were ideal to respond to social and cultural concerns regarding human nature. Fairy tales were utilized as a "testing ground for the moral and philosophical implications of scientific discoveries"

(Feldman 5), as the genre sat comfortably within a supernatural and fanciful setting. As Gillian Beer explains in her influential study of Darwin's impact on nineteenth-century narratives, the Victorian's fascination with growth and transformation fueled an "intellectual interest in *märchen*, fairy tale and myth, which increased as the century went on" (97). Paull's edition of the Grimms' "The Frog Prince" (1868) and Andersen's "The Marsh King's Daughter" (1895) respond to a coexisting interest in metamorphosis.¹ These animal bride and animal groom tales involve protagonists who are enchanted or cursed into an amphibious form. While this body may transform throughout the tale, the character must inevitably perform a fixed metamorphosis. Those who return to their human bodies are recompensed with mar-

riage arrangements and financial reward, while those who are unable to perform such feats are destined to die. When the human protagonist is threatened with animalistic associations, these tales present an undeniable urge to reinstate the human and animal divide. By distinguishing humanness as separate from animality, these tales rally against Darwin's controversial theory in order to support a hierarchical, dualistic, and socially-acceptable link between humans and animals.

Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859) presented evidence from his expedition on the HMS Beagle (1831-6), along with subsequent research findings collated from experimentation and correspondence, which asserted that all life had emerged from one common progenitor. From this point, Darwin argues, organisms evolved via a process of natural selection. Furthermore, natural selection dictated that those less suited to a given environment have a comparatively low chance of survival and reproduction (*Origin* 189). In his later work *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), Darwin expanded his theory to assert that the human race evolved from the bestial realm:

[I]t seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his godlike intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system—with all these exalted powers—Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin. (Darwin, *Descent of Man* 613)

The Victorians were faced with a disturbing truth: all humans had descended from godless brutes. This was a damning association as animals were placed significantly low on the great chain of being.² Peter J. Bowler explains that “the human race itself became merely another animal species, no longer the lords of creation but only superior apes” (2). Victorian society rebelled against this assessment. In his lectures on moral philosophy, Reverend Sydney Smith took solace in the human capacity for art and culture as a form of distinction:

I confess I feel myself so much at my ease about the superiority of mankind,—I have such a marked and decided contempt for the understanding of every baboon I have yet seen—I feel so sure that the blue ape without a tail will never rival us in poetry, painting, and music ... I have sometimes, perhaps, felt a little uneasy at Exeter Change, from contrasting the monkeys with the ‘prentice boys who are teasing them; but a few pages of Locke, or a few lines of Milton, have always restored my tranquillity, and convinced me that the superiority of man had nothing to fear. (238).

Such adamant attempts to preserve human superiority expose the social anxieties that Darwinism ignited. Like René Descartes before him,³ Smith argues that animals do not possess a soul in an attempt to defend humanity's privileged position and restore belief in a teleological world. Darwinism dethroned God in an age of creationism. Christianity declared that humans were elevated over nature while animals were perceived as “the brutes that perish” (Bowler 7). As Peter Bowler suggests, Darwinism directly threatened this ordained hierarchy:

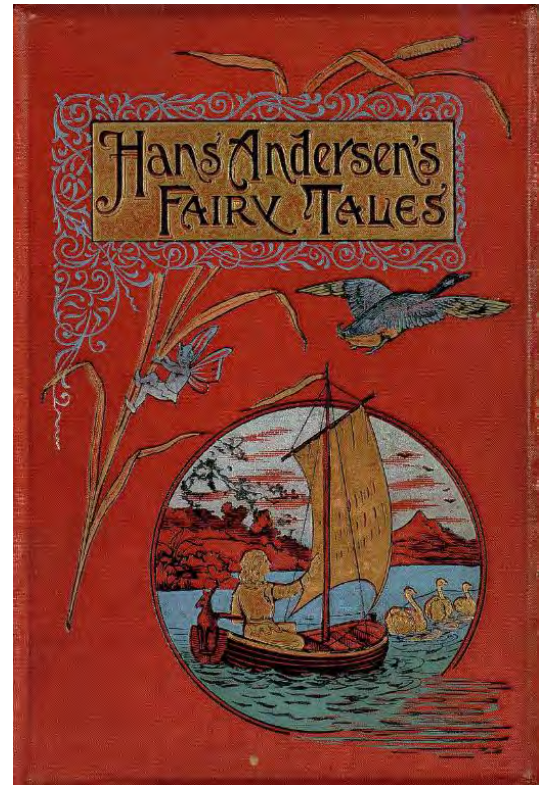
Evolutionism states that the human race must have evolved from the lower animals and cannot have this unique status. In this view, we are part of nature, and our higher faculties cannot stem from a spiritual factor with which we alone are endowed. Even our moral or ethical feelings (our conscience) must be seen as an extension of the animal social instincts produced by the laws of natural evolution. (7)

Nevertheless, traditionalists remained dubious about the theory's validity. Such criticism is encapsulated in the debate between creationist Bishop Samuel Wilberforce and Darwin's proverbial bulldog, evolutionist Thomas Henry Huxley, at the Oxford University Museum in 1860, where academic debate quickly turned into a series of successive insults between both parties involved. At a separate seminar, Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon scorned evolutionary theory, claiming “there is Mr. Darwin, who at once is prepared to prove that our great-grandfather's father—keep on for about a millennium or two—was a guinea-pig, and that we were ourselves originally

descended from oysters, or seaweeds, or starfishes” (qtd. in Reel 194). While religious figures circulated misunderstandings, Darwin himself faced public mockery; *Punch*, *Fun*, *Figaro* and *The Hornet* magazine featured Darwin’s head fixed on a monkey’s body (Smith, Charles Darwin 235). Indeed, Jonathan Smith hypothesizes that Darwin’s image “circulated more widely in caricatured form than in the various photographic portraits of him” (235).

Children’s fantasy literature was an appropriate platform to relay the controversial nature of Darwinism.⁴ As Mary Feldman suggests, fantasy literature “offers a laboratory where theories about the human condition can be tested and proven within a hypothetical and controlled fictional setting without the constraints of trying to achieve realism” (10). By appealing to a child audience, fairy tale literature further propels this experimentation. As a genre primarily focused in education, children’s literature conditions its audience to accept specific world values. Through its aspirations to be an educational text suitable for children, the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812) was readily translatable to a Victorian child audience by 1823. As prominent fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes comments, this is encapsulated by the Grimms’ 1819 collection, which was labelled “*Erziehungsbuch*”⁵ (*Art of Subversion* 48). Andersen’s fairy tale literature was similarly acknowledged by the Victorian public. The author’s inclusion of Christian principles in his tales “paved the way for a wider acceptance of fairy tales as suitable for children” (Tälairach-Vielmas 273). The sheer number of English editions of Andersen’s work led Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen to classify him as “to all intents and purposes an English writer, read by millions of people who do not understand a word of Danish, and exerting more influence on English children’s writing than any native Briton until Lewis Carroll” (16).

While Paull’s *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* (1868) and *Hans Andersen’s Fairy Tales: A New Translation* (1895) are not faithful translations,⁶ both her collections were reprinted throughout the nineteenth century. As Maria-Venetia Kyritsi states, “the more faithful editions [of fairy tales], such as that of Margaret Hunt, did not gain such a large readership or achieve great popularity, while the less faithful ones—which sometimes even verged on adaptation—such as that of Edgar Taylor, were very popular and enjoyed a very long and fruitful publishing history” (37). Paull’s



propensity for creativity is encapsulated in a review in *The Spectator* dated 26 November 1887 in which *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* is not classified as a translation of the Grimms’ original collection: “These tales are not Grimm’s at all, but adapted from Grimm’s at her own arbitrary discretion ... the English is generally very good, though it not infrequently misses entirely the meaning of the German” (20). I will therefore refer to Paull’s editions as adaptations due to the creative license she imposes upon the tales. Moreover, Paull’s editions are especially significant as she is the only nineteenth-century translator to produce versions from Hans Christian Andersen and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Once her collections became readily available, Paull’s English adaptations helped to popularize Andersen and the Grimms’ fairy tale literature, allowing them to become fixtures of childhood reading in the English-speaking world.

Paull’s “The Marsh King’s Daughter” adheres to popular consensus by asserting that humans are superior to all animals.⁷ The tale’s protagonist, Helga, is cursed to exist as a frog-human hybrid. During the day, she is externally beautiful yet internally wicked

and wild. Conversely, at night, she transforms into a hideous frog yet harbors a pleasant and refined attitude. As such, Helga's outward appearance contradicts her internal self: "Here were two natures, changing inwardly and outwardly with the absence and return of sunlight" (Andersen 490). While her foster mother is initially appalled by her visage and even attains "a heavy stick to kill the frog" (489), she soon recognizes the child's cognitive abilities:

The ugly frog, in its monstrous shape, stood before her, and raised its brown mournful eyes to her face, listening to her words, and seeming to understand them with the intelligence of a human being. (Andersen 501)

While Helga remains in her frog form, she is perceived as a sentient being capable of intellectual thought and emotional expression. This sentiment echoes Darwin's *Descent of Man*, which dictates that humans and beasts share similar cognitive functions: "there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties" (64). This mental similitude prompts Helga's mother to prefer her daughter's bestial form: "After a while, it is quite certain the foster-mother began to love the poor frog, with its gentle eyes and its deep sighs, even better than the little beauty who bit and fought with all around her" (Andersen 492). By recognizing that her child is capable of expressing human intellect, Helga's foster mother promotes animality with humanity.

Despite this reassurance from her foster mother, Helga is able to shed her frog skin and maintain her humble nature by finding solace in God:

Again she made the holy sign in the air, between herself and the dead man; her lips trembled, her tongue moved, and the name which she in her ride through the forest had so often heard spoken, rose to her lips, and she uttered the words, "Jesus Christ." Then the frog skin fell from her; she was once more a lovely maiden. Her head bent wearily, her tired limbs required rest, and then she slept. (Andersen 507)

Boria Sax describes love as "very literally, a humanizing power" in animal-bride tales (33), and Helga's

adoration of God is clearly outlined. Yet despite this transformation, Helga is given another opportunity to bridge the divide between animality and humanity. Upon finding her biological mother, a stork gives Helga and her mother a swan's skin that allows them to metamorphose into swans. This transformation allows the reunited pair to fly back to their homeland, Egypt:

Then he returned to the mother and daughter, and threw the swan's plumage over them; the feathers immediately closed around them, and they rose up from the earth in the form of two white swans. (Andersen 514)

As Leavy explains, the swan maiden can decide between an animal or human existence: "the swan maiden can take off the feather dress that makes her a bird or lay her animal skin aside to take human form" (103). However, shortly after this transformation, Helga is exposed to a bright light "from the Source of light Himself" causing her body to crumble and turn into a faded lotus flower (Andersen 519). Paull's adaptation reiterates that the animal-human hybrid cannot exist in flux. Instead, Helga must conform to human characteristics. While Helga attempts to achieve this in earlier episodes, she cannot control her animal genetics. Her metamorphosis from a white swan (Andersen 510) to her human body (514) emphasizes her inability to remain innately human. As a result, Helga is destined to die. If she lives, she reaffirms that humanity is a fluctuating, evolving concept—a troubling representation for a Victorian audience with strong Christian influences.

Conversely, Paull's adaptation of the Grimms' "The Frog Prince" presents a frog-human hybrid who makes a fixed transformation into a human. "The Frog Prince" concerns a princess who, while playing with a golden ball, loses it in a stream. A frog tells her that he will return it if she promises to give him food and shelter. Although she promises to abide by the frog's will, the girl runs away when the frog retrieves her golden ball. The frog follows her home and he, as well as the girl's father, urges the princess to honor her promise. Begrudgingly, the princess places the frog in the corner of her bedroom. When the frog urges the girl to share her bed with him, she becomes infuriated and throws the frog against a wall. At this point, the frog metamorphoses into a

charming prince and they are instantly betrothed.

Paull's "The Frog Prince" introduces an antithetical relationship between humanity and animality. During their initial meeting, the princess is disgusted by the frog's abject appearance. While she promises to shelter and nourish the frog, "she thought to herself that a silly, chattering frog as he was, living in the water with others like himself, and croaking, could not be fit to associate with mankind" (Grimm 10). Yet this pecking order is disturbed during the tale's dinner sequence

"Now, then, push your little golden plate nearer, and we will eat together." The Princess did as he told her, but every one could see how much she disliked it. The frog seemed to relish his dinner very much, but he would give the Princess half of all he took. (Grimm 11).

By eating at the table, the frog seeks to disrupt the hierarchy between the human and animal realm. Indeed, while his movement is described in animalistic terms such as "hopping" (Grimm 11) and "croaking" (10), the Prince attempts to repress his bestial behavior. By sharing a plate of food with a human, the frog intends to mimic civilized culture. Before he is able to physically transform, the frog must first demonstrate that he can act with civility and dignity. Zipes maintains that the animal groom is obliged to prove his humanness: "Ugly beasts must show that they know how to groom themselves, or at the very least they must devise a strategy to deceive their future brides and to influence the brides' fathers, if they want to obtain the object of their desire" (*What Makes* 115-6). That is, as a potential mate, the frog must display that he can successfully repress his innate animality. Once this has been achieved, the frog is rewarded with a human bride. In this way, the frog prince must domesticate his animalistic urges in order to be classed as internally human.

Yet inevitably, the frog's animality is exposed when he proposes to share the princess's bed. After the dinner sequence, the frog states, "now carry me upstairs into your little bed-room, and make your silken bed ready, that we may sleep together" (Grimm 11). By asking to sleep in the princess's bed (which insinuates the frog's sexual urges), the frog's animality is revealed. As James Turner states, com-

parisons between sexuality and animality were prevalent in nineteenth-century England:

Sex and animality: those two fears (if indeed they could be wholly separated) reinforced one another. Sexual impulses reminded one of the beast inside. Mention of human animality brought to mind the banked fires of sex, threatening always to flame up out of control. (68)

Indeed, Bruno Bettelheim,⁸ notorious for his psychoanalytic interpretations of fairy tale literature, assimilates frogs with male sex organs, claiming that "the frog's ability to blow itself out when excited" suggests phallic connotations (290). This may explain why the frog incites disgust, rather than fear, in the protagonist. For example, when the princess is told by her father to take the frog to her room, she picks it up "with two fingers" and "hold[s] him as far from her as possible" (Grimm 11). While the amphibian as phallus can be debated, the frog's sexual appetite is solidified by his insistence on sharing the princess's bed. In this way, sexuality and animality are symbiotic constituents.

Despite broadcasting his sexual tendencies, it is only when the princess rejects the frog by "dash[ing] him with all her strength against the wall" that the prince can undergo his transformation (Grimm 11). By rejecting the frog's advances, the princess rejects the highest form of animality: sexuality. As Leavy argues, "the disenchantment of the beast husband also speaks to the disenchanted's subduing of her own basic drives" (145). The princess rejects animalistic impulses, and in doing so, confirms her own righteous and virtuous behavior. It is only when this transformation takes place that the princess is allowed to court the man:

But as he fell, how surprised she was to see the frog change into a handsome young Prince, with beautiful friendly eyes, who afterwards became her constant companion, and at last her father gave his consent to their marriage. (Grimm 12)

Once the animal groom rejects animalistic activities, he is not only rewarded with financial gain and marital bliss; he is able to declare his patriarchal right



to rule. Leavy explains that while animal brides are stripped of status once they are humanized, animal grooms are often compensated for their misery:

The beast husband freed from his nonhuman form assumes with pride the status that men enjoy in patriarchal societies. Often he inherits a kingdom he can now rule unimpeded by the deficiencies implied by his animal form. True, he relinquishes his exclusive tie to nature, that is, freedom to satisfy basic drives unconstrained by society's requirements, but the stories say he has won more than he has lost. (144)

In this way, animality is treated differently according to gender. While the princely frog is rewarded, animal brides (such as Helga) are often penalized. Despite this difference in representation, animality is persistently described as a curse to be avoided. The animal bride and groom are urged to relinquish bestial ties as, inevitably, their existence as an animal-human hybrid is substandard in comparison to their human counterparts. By suppressing animality, both the frog prince and the princess are able to resume normative gender roles: the princess acquires a suitable mate who she is able to reproduce with and the prince undertakes his patriarchal prerogative to govern. In this way, Paull's variant concludes with an animal-to-human transformation because the prince (as well as his bedfellow) rejects animalistic impulses and, therefore, may become wholly human.

Paull's titillated toads and faithful frogs promote humanness as a fixed construct. While both "The Marsh King's Daughter" and "The Frog Prince"

dally in animal-to-human transformation, humans are cast in binary opposition to the animal kingdom. Helga is lured by her bestial past and is unable to quell her animal genetics. Her metamorphosis from a frog, to a human, to a swan and finally to a lotus flower highlights her incapacity to remain definitively human. This behavior carries severe consequences and predicts her ultimate demise. By portraying humanity as an unstable, evolving concept, Helga's representation is confronting to a Christian audience that maintained belief in a teleological world. Comparatively, Paull's princely frog offers a conventional understanding of humanity. By refraining from animal behavior, he and his paramour are bestowed with marital bliss and financial reward. In this way, both tales suggest that the human race may only reign supreme when it is defined in opposition to animality.

Evolutionary theory was highly challenging to Victorian sensibilities. Darwinism not only undermined belief in a teleological universe; it additionally demoted humankind from its assumed superior status. By commenting on human and animal similarity amidst a fanciful, fantastical setting, fairy tale literature became a safe platform to respond to Darwinian anxieties as expressed by traditionalists. While H.B. Paull may audaciously display an interplay between humanity and animality, she inevitably concludes her tales with a definitive understanding that humanity is superior to the animal kingdom. Paull's protagonists classify humanness as that which is deprived of animal constituents. By presenting animal existence as a substandard experience, Paull's adaptations thrust humankind into a fixed position of power, privilege, and authority.



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1 Gillian Beer explains how it is impossible to withdraw a text from significant ideological values. Referring to Victorian England, Beer states: "Everyone found themselves living in a Darwinian world in which old assumptions had ceased to be assumptions, could be at best beliefs, or myths, or, at worst, detritus of the past. So the question of who read Darwin, or whether a writer had read Darwin, becomes only a fraction of the answer" (3). As such, while it is unknown whether H.B. Paull was personally affiliated with evolutionary theory, it can be asserted that natural selection became a social convention that pervaded England's intellectual milieu.

2 For more on the great chain of being in the Victorian period, see Lesko, Nancy. *Act your Age! A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2012. *The University of Melbourne*. Web. 27 November 2014.

3 See: Descartes, René. "Discourse on the Method for Conducting One's Reason Well and for Seeking the Truth in the Sciences" *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*. Ed. Roger Ariew. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated, 2000. 46-82. *Google Books*. Web. 11 November 2014.

4 See Kingsley, Charles. *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby*. Boston: T. O. H. P. Burnham, 1864. *Google Book Search*. Web. 28 October 2014 (and) Gatty, Margaret. *Parables from Nature*. London: Bell and Daldy, 1864. *Google Book Search*. Web. 28 October 2014.

5 An educational book

6 This paper will not examine the accuracy of her collections through comparison with the German and Danish originals. Translation analysis has already formed the basis of a number of studies including Martin Sutton's *The Sin-Complex: A Critical Study of English Versions of the Grimms' 'Kinder- und Hausmärchen' in the Nineteenth Century* (1996), Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen's *Ugly Ducklings? Studies in the English Translations of Hans Christian Andersen's Tales and Stories* (2004), and Gillian Lathey's *The Role of Translators in Children's Literature: Invisible Storytellers* (2010). Fairy tale scholarship has focused on the circulation of tales in their original languages within Europe, or on original tales produced by British authors. This leaves a crucial void with respect to the circulation of English versions of the two most popular names associated with fairy tales in the nineteenth century.

7 H.B. Paull's translation of Andersen's "The Marsh King's Daughter" (1895) concerns a princess who (along with her two sisters) must restore her father's ailing health by attaining a flower growing in a far-away bog. Donning swan skin that gives them the power of flight they fly from Egypt to Denmark. Upon arrival, her two sisters destroy the princess's swan skin and leave her. Suddenly, the marsh king submerges from the depths of the bog and abducts the princess. After a while, a lily grows in her place, holding a small child within. A number of storks (who are narrating the narrative) take the child to a Viking chief's wife, who has been yearning for a child of her own. They name her Helga. Due to her complex heritage, she lives by day as a malicious human and by night as a pleasant frog. When her family captures a traveling priest, Helga promises to slay him. However, when she metamorphoses into a frog at night, she helps the priest escape this sentence. In the process of escaping, the priest is slaughtered by bandits. In burying him and praying for her own soul to be baptized, Helga turns back into a human. The ghost of the priest guides her to the marsh her mother had been abducted in. She sees her mother under the water and pulls her out. The storks give them swan skins (stolen from her evil sisters) and they fly back to Egypt. It is discovered that Helga was the flower that was meant to restore the king's health and upon arriving, he is instantly cured by her sight. Helga is arranged to marry a prince however on her wedding night, a vision of the priest appears. She asks the priest to show her the face of God. The priest agrees, yet Helga is so awestruck that she asks for more time to bask in His glory. When Helga wakes from this vision, she realizes that everyone she had known is gone. She tries communicating with the storks but they do not recognize her. She discovers that she has been gone for centuries. As a result, God turns her back into the flower she originated from.

8 It should be noted that Bettelheim's adherence to Freudian methodology is controversial amongst scholars such as Maria Tatar, who describes his narrative as erroneously turning characters from the folktale tradition into real people "stretched out on the psychoanalytic couch" (*Off With Their Heads* xxii). Leavy even adds that to study Bettelheim is to "discover significant weaknesses in his arguments" (113).

A portrait of Beverley Naidoo, an older woman with short, curly grey hair, wearing glasses and a red jacket. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

Authors & Their Books

beverley Naidoo grew up in South Africa under apartheid. After leaving university in Johannesburg she was detained without trial and later went into exile in Britain where she studied at the University of York, worked as a teacher, education adviser and writer. She received her PhD from the University of Southampton for research into white teenagers' responses to literature and racism. Her first children's book, *Journey to Jo'burg* (1985), was banned in South Africa until 1991. She has won many awards, including the Carnegie Medal for *The Other Side of Truth* (2000).

“What Is and What Might Be”

Beverley Naidoo

I want to take you on something of a journey.¹ My thread, not to lose our way, may sometimes be buried underfoot and not always immediately visible. But the thread—multi-twined, multicolored—is to raise some thoughts around “belonging,” including the question of whether we conceive of ourselves and our children primarily as members of a particular tribe or of a wider, diverse humanity linked by rights and responsibilities.

I would like to begin the journey over a hundred years ago. Can you imagine a chief inspector of schools today writing a book in which his opening sentence condemns our education system’s fixation with “outward and visible ‘results’” that he links to “the *externalism* of the West”?

My aim, in writing this book, is to show that the *externalism* of the West, the prevalent tendency to pay undue regard to outward and visible “results” and to neglect what is inward and vital, is the source of most of the defects that vitiate Education in this country. (Holmes, “Preface”)

The “only remedy” for the defects, he says, is drastic. We have to change “our standard of reality and our conception of the meaning and value of life.” He

goes on to propose a view of education profoundly influenced by Buddhism and ideas from the ancient East. He asks questions such as whether the teacher will

lead the child into the path of self-realization. ... Or will [the teacher], in his thirst for “results,” lead [the child] into the path of mechanical obedience, or, at best, of one-sided development, and so blight his budding faculties and arrest the growth of his soul? (299)

Can we imagine a chief inspector today who would choose to debate how we educate our children in terms of ideas generated *beyond* the West?

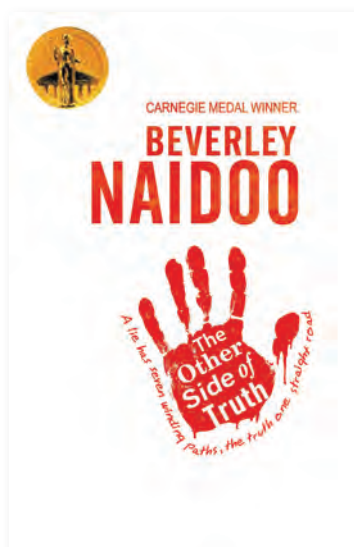
Now I do not share the writer’s conception of civilizations being confined to East and West, with colonial-era notions about Africans and their descendants. But when he later goes on to describe “A School in Utopia”—based on an actual village elementary school—and its dedicated, imaginative head teacher, I recognize features of some of the book-loving schools that we authors are sometimes privileged to visit. It is the kind of school where you quickly sense affirmative principles of inclusion and where you meet children who appear, as in the

writer’s “School in Utopia,” happy, responsive, overflowing with life, interested in many things, and full of ability and resource (161). He was especially impressed by children helping each other when some were struggling.

I wish I could take this chief inspector of a bygone era to a school that I recently visited in Brixton, south London, where Year 6 children have been reading my book *The Other Side of Truth*.

This is my novel about two young Nigerians whose lives are drastically changed when their mother is killed in an assassination attack aimed at their outspoken journalist father. In the course of reading, the Year 6 teachers took their classes to Victoria Station where they examined the location at which my characters Sade and Femi are shamefully deserted by the lady paid to smuggle them into Britain. The Year 6 children then looked for the Number 36 bus and followed Sade and Femi’s route in search of their Uncle Dele, who lectures at a London art college. “Is the London College of Art in your book based on Camberwell College of Art?” they asked. Beginning to explore links between fiction and reality, they were also beginning to wonder about the novel’s creation.

More questions flowed as I ate lunch with a group of children. Three questions remain with me. The first two reflect Britain’s deep divisions: “How many televisions do you have in your house?” asked one lad who seemed surprised when I replied, “One very old one that I hardly watch.” To another boy’s question, “Do you live in a palace?”, I answered no but later wondered whether my house and garden near the sea might not indeed seem palatial to a child in a cramped south London dwelling. The third question, however, was of a completely different nature—and the most hopeful: “Do you write plays?” asked a Year 6 girl. When I said yes, an animated conversation followed. She told me about how she had visited the Unicorn Theatre, helping out with a Year 1 class, how she had seen *Emil and the Detectives* at the National Theatre (Kastner / Miller), and how she loved going to the theatre. Later, the deputy head told me of the school’s commitment



to every child’s entitlement to visit the theatre and to work with artists. Incidentally, this school does not use reading schemes but promotes “real books”! For the record, Ofsted’s current view of the school is that it is “good” with some features that are “outstanding.”²

I am confident that this long-gone chief inspector would have admired the teaching and learning in this highly urban school with its strong vision of enabling children to overcome barriers. I also think he would have rapidly found himself challenged on his colonial-era assumptions and racial stereotyping of black people.

But who is this writer—and why have I begun with him?

He is Edmond Holmes, and he called his book *What Is and What Might Be*. It was published before World War One in 1911, following his forced resignation, along with that of the Secretary to the Board of Education. The trigger was the leaking of a confidential memo by Holmes in which he had criticized school inspectors who were former elementary school teachers fixated on arid drill methods caused through “payments by results.” This chief inspector was clearly off-message politically—and it cost him his job. So by the time of writing his book, he was actually an ex-chief inspector. He went on to declare his shame at his own role, for over thirty years, in perpetuating a system that deadened what he had come to believe was a child’s natural creativity.

In some respects, maybe pre-World War One 1911 is not such a remote era after all when we contemplate other echoes in the “What Is” of Holmes’ title. In particular, I am thinking of the disturbing rise in introverted nationalism that we see in Britain and across Europe as we currently flounder in turbulent economic seas. When I detect traces of colonial arrogance in the limited vision of those at our helm, I sorely miss the insight, breadth of knowledge, and voice of the cultural theorist Stuart Hall who died in 2014. It was Stuart Hall who characterized Margaret Thatcher’s politics as “authoritarian populism” (15). Emphasizing the role of “race” within this populism, he was prescient about how Thatcherism would in-

fluence our politics long after her death.

When I arrived in this country—seeking refuge from apartheid South Africa in the mid-1960s—race, class, and gender discrimination were deeply embedded and often overt. But, at the same time, movements were afoot to challenge the old fault lines and a sense of the post-World War Two collective drive to make Britain a fairer place. In education, for instance, Jennie Lee was Minister for the Arts in a Labour government planning The Open University. The OU embodied belief in the power of education to add meaning to—and transform—the lives of individuals who had previously missed out on higher education. Its vision was premised on "What Might Be" and its courses were affordable.

While Britain had been divesting itself of former colonies, they still remained a presence through the Commonwealth and migration. The country's demographics were changing: "We are here because you were there."

I had been in my first year at my South African university when, in 1961, the apartheid government had walked out of the Commonwealth, refusing to stomach equality with independent African countries. British government and business nevertheless retained strong economic and political ties with South Africa. But by the time I arrived in the UK in 1965, an anti-apartheid movement was growing and mobilizing support amongst ordinary Britons who recognized apartheid as morally wrong. Amnesty International, founded in 1961, was likewise uniting people in common action against injustices beyond Britain's borders. Organizations like these were premised on "What Might Be," attracting people whose commitment was spurred by ideas of social justice and public service rather than financial interest.

The traditional world of children's books in the 1960s, however, remained very much a cottage garden surrounded by high protective walls. Yet in the UK and across the Atlantic, change was afoot in the world outside. We have been offered glimpses of a few books from this era through contributions to *The Guardian* Children's Books website, following Seven Stories' Diverse Voices—50 of the Best Children's Books (www.sevenstories.org.uk/news/latestnews/diverse-voice-top-50). Incidentally, I've noticed the title being shortened in "marketing speak" to "The 50 Best" which, frankly, goes against the spirit of the movement to open the enclosed walls.

The international literary journal *Wasafiri* no. 60 contains some articles that speak of this history. My co-editor, Shereen Pandit, and I called our issue *New Generations: Writing for Children and Young Adults*. In a fine article, Professor Rudine Sims Bishop charts "Black People's Journey across the American Hopescape," using the writer Virginia Hamilton's poignant phrase. It was Rudine Sims Bishop who created the memorable image of books as "sliding glass doors." She was referring to the need for books through which young people may enter imagined worlds, as well as offering mirrors in which readers can see themselves and their experiences reflected.

The Harlem Renaissance writer Langston Hughes wrote his first book for children as early as 1932. Yet it was only towards the end of the civil rights movement that the Council on Interracial Books for Children was formed in 1966. It has always been a long road—as you can hear in Langston Hughes' poem of 1959 "Mother to Son."

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters;
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor –
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now –
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
(187)

By the end of the 1960s, the African American writer Julius Lester had received a Newbery Honor for his ground-breaking *To Be a Slave* (1968), with illustrations by Tom Feelings. This profound little book, recording memories of ex-slaves, reached British shores in 1970 with Lester's dedication:

The ancestry of any black American can be traced to a bill of sale and no further. In many instances even that cannot be done. Such is a true part of my family. This book is dedicated to the memory of my great-grandparents. ... I never knew them, but I am proud to be one of their descendants. I hope that I may be worthy of them, their strength and their courage.

In books that followed, Lester retold stories derived and imagined from this hidden history. Real life informed much of the creative work by other inspiring African American writers for young people—including Trinidadian-born Rosa Guy, the author of a stunning young adult trilogy that began with *The Friends* (1976). Guy was equally an activist, and co-founder of the Harlem Writers' Guild that aimed to develop and aid publication of works by writers from the African diaspora. (Maya Angelou was another member.)

The spirit behind the work of these pioneer African American writers was that of "What Might Be." In telling stories that reflected barriers and obstacles, both in the past and the present, what came through was the capacity to endure, to survive, and to imagine a different future.

A few US picture books made their way to the UK. Like other parents in the 1970s desperate for positive images to counter the prevailing norm of absence or negative representation of black characters, I would search them out. Two early arrivals were Ezra Jack Keats' *Whistle for Willie* and *Stevie* by John Steptoe. In Britain, Petronella Breinberg's home-grown *My Brother Sean*, so warmly illustrated by Errol Lloyd, was cause for much celebration.

For our *Wasafiri: New Generations* issue, we asked Rosemary Stones to write about developments in Britain. Given her active role, she was well placed to answer the question "Multicultural Publishing in Britain: How Did It Happen?" In her article, she refers to two seminal black bookshops in London that were part of a cultural movement of creative resistance to racism, promoting and publishing books by black and diaspora writers: New Beacon Books and Bogle l'Ouverture. Significantly, both ventures, begun in the late 1960s, took young people and their education very seriously, as did the community bookshop movement, including Centreprise.

In 1971, a pioneering bibliography *Books for Chil-*

dren: The Homelands of Immigrants in Britain by Janet Hill, with contributions from various London librarians, revealed a dismal picture of blatant prejudice and bias added to dullness in so many children's books.

By 1975, the Children's Rights Workshop, of which Rosemary Stones was co-founder, initiated The Other Award in Britain. This alternative award considered representations of gender, race, class, and disability, in addition to literary and aesthetic merit in books for young people. Winners did not receive money. Instead, posters promoting their books were displayed in schools and libraries. I recall the award receiving flak from some quarters, accused of bringing politics into the cottage garden. But as teachers and librarians began to respond positively, especially in urban areas, awareness began to grow and attitudes began to shift.

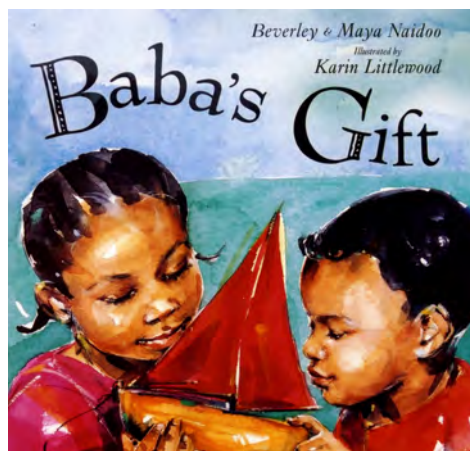
Criteria, guidelines, and lists were part of a process of educating publishers, book selectors, and media to recognize stereotypes and misrepresentation. There were many heated debates.

Two critical journals encouraged the growing awareness, both first published in 1979. *Dragons Teeth*, edited by Dorothy Kuya for the National Committee on Racism in Children's Books, campaigned specifically against widespread overt and covert racism.³ The *Children's Book Bulletin*, edited by Rosemary Stones and Andrew Mann, was subtitled "For News of Progressive Moves in Children's Literature" and looked at a full range of representation issues. Although there were only six issues of the *Children's Book Bulletin*,⁴ they were hugely influential. I imagine the founders of Letterbox Library read them too.

In 1981, I joined the education group of the British Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, the brainchild of Canon Collins of St Paul's Cathedral, dating back to the 1950s. The redoubtable Canon even got Paul Robeson singing in St Paul's to raise funds. Although banned in South Africa, BDAF (as we called it) secretly managed to send vast sums of money into the country both for the defense of political prisoners and to their families, the latter through a network of many ordinary Britons. With the backing of the education group, I undertook to write a story that would open a window for British children onto what it meant to live under apartheid.

In 1983, my draft of what became *Journey to Jo'burg* was sent to a number of British publishers,

who turned it down. Most gave no explanation. It was my first children's book, and I might easily have concluded that my writing was not good enough. Had I done justice to the story of two courageous black children encountering the obstacles of apartheid as they strive to save their desperately sick baby sister? One publisher let the cat out of the bag, with the comment that I had a mismatch between the content and the simple style in which I had written the story. The publisher suggested that I rewrite it for older readers. I declined. This was a time when the most widely stocked non-fiction book for children on South Africa—*Let's Visit South Africa*—told readers that "The Kung Bushmen have a tiny brain, their language sounds more like the chatter of baboons than the talk of men," and "Apartheid is a fas-



inating experiment."

Fortunately, my *Journey to Jo'burg* draft was picked up by Longman Education for a series for teenagers who were not strong readers and published in 1985. The first two copies that I sent into South Africa were intercepted, and the book was immediately banned there. Apart from the story, the censors would have seen that half the royalties were going to BDAF, a banned organization.

Over in the UK, however, the book received The Other Award in 1985. It rapidly found its way into primary as well as secondary schools, especially in cities like London, as well as abroad. When Rosemary Stones joined the publisher Collins as an editor, she took it on as a trade book. A progressive trade editor made all the difference. This year, 2015, the book that nearly wasn't, celebrates its 30th anniversary.



Figure 1. From *Baba's Gift*, copyright © 2004. illus. karin littlewood. r eproduced with permission.

I set a number of subsequent fictional works in my birth country with its vast store of human challenges. Looking back at these works, it is not just the physical fences, walls, and barriers that exclude or enclose, but barriers in the mind that have to be overcome as my characters make their particular journeys. How do you free your mind in an un-free society? Whether you are black or white, how do you imagine “What Might Be” when “What Is” powerfully confines and constricts your reality?

None of the stories in my collection *Out of Bounds*—ranging from the beginning of apartheid through to post-apartheid—is free of that tension, including the final two stories set after the first democratic elections when Nelson Mandela became president. “The Playground,” about the first black girl to enter a previously all white school in 1995, and the title story, set in the year 2000, continue to reflect the challenges of boundaries, especially those in the mind.

It was some twenty years after *Journey to Jo’burg* before I set a story in South Africa for younger children that implicitly celebrates freedom of movement and, with it, the possibility of new friendships. Written with my daughter Maya and illustrated by Karin Littlewood, *Baba’s Gift* takes young readers on two children’s journey through the dramatically beautiful landscape where Maya’s dad, my husband Nandha, grew up on a sugarcane farm near the Indian Ocean—and from which he had been exiled for forty years. It is a story of something lost, namely the little boat that Baba, the children’s father, has made for them to sail on their day trip to the sea. But, more importantly, it is a story of something found. This is not just a sparkling oyster shell but a sense of belonging to a wider world than that of the rural farmstead from which they have come. Karin Littlewood’s flowing watercolors of children playing on a beach convey scenes that would have been impossible in apartheid days (see Figure 1).

However, picking up my multi-twined thread, I cannot say that “belonging,” in itself, is inevitably good and desirable. We have to ask, belonging to what? Sometimes it may be better not to belong. Such questions underlie my novel set in colonial Kenya in the early 1950s. *Burn My Heart* opens as the Mau Mau rebellion against white settlers is gaining ground. While I was growing up 3000 miles south in Johannesburg, I was very aware of family “up north”

living on a farm in the Highlands beneath Mount Kenya. This was the area in the center of Mau Mau attacks, and I remember adult talk of how my cousin’s family was “sticking it out.”

In *Burn My Heart*, I interweave two narratives: that of Mathew Grayson, grandson and son of British settlers; and that of Mugo, the “kitchen toto.” Forty years earlier, Mugo’s Kikuyu grandfather had been chief over the same land, until dispossessed by Mathew’s ancestors. Mugo’s father, Kamau, also works for the Graysons, looking after the horses.

While the two boys like each other, their friendship is premised on a power relationship. Mugo is older and wiser—but Mathew remains the boss’s son. The arrival in Mathew’s school of Lance, son of a police inspector, brings a new dynamic. When Lance sets up “a game of Mau Mau,” with the younger children at the European club having to be Mau Mau and rounded up as terrorists, Mathew is flattered to be made Lance’s adjutant, even if slightly repelled by his new friend’s bossiness.

Mathew sprinted across the lawn towards the guest huts. Around the corner and before he had even reached the first building, he found a cluster of younger children hiding beneath a thick bougainvillea, cascading with orange-paper flowers. When he pulled out the first child, the rest meekly trooped out and followed him to their detention.

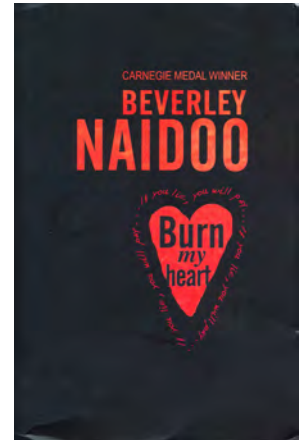
“You’re not much good at being Mau Mau”, he said rather crossly.

Within ten minutes, Mathew and Lance had rounded up nearly everyone. It wasn’t much of a game as no one had resisted.

“When is your dad going to sign up with the Police Reserve?” Lance asked Mathew as they marched the last captive to the tennis court. In school Lance had told everyone how his father would soon be a Chief Inspector.

“He says he’s going to... if things get worse.” Mathew felt embarrassed by Lance’s directness.

“What’s he waiting for? Dad says if we want to get rid of Mau Mau, we have to do it



ourselves. He reckons we'll all be dead if we sit back and wait for the government to do it."

Mathew was silent. He wanted to defend Father... to say that Father wasn't "sitting back". He had built a second security fence, only a hundred yards from the house. He had it guarded night and day by tall Turkana men from the north who had nothing to do with the local Kikuyu. Father never went anywhere now without his revolver, even inside the house. He had even made Mother take lessons how to shoot and she had her own pistol. But what if Lance's father was correct? What if Father was too trusting? Father wasn't like some farmers who had their labourers whipped. Everyone knew how Lance's grandfather used to have his foreman whip men with the stinging kiboko made from hippo hide. Father had never let that happen on their farm. "*It turns your labour against you.*" That's why he thought they were loyal. But how could you tell?

(Naidoo, *Burn My Heart*, 68–69)

Later, when faced with a choice, Mathew chooses to belong to the wrong club, with consequences he will terribly regret. I am sorry I do not have time to read you some of Mugo's narrative, but here is the front piece to the novel:

How do I tell you this story?
Do I tell you the truth, the whole truth
and nothing but the truth?
Do I tell you my side or his?
What if I had been born on his side and
he on mine?
We were both only children ...

There is a Gikuyu proverb: "Nobody walks with another person's gait." In an unequal society, is it possible for the youth at the top to see beyond their blinkers of privilege? For the youth below, denied equal rights, where lies hope? Can young people envisage a shared humanity when inequality is extreme?

There are no simple answers although what brings IBBY members together is our belief in stories: their creative possibilities and their potential to raise consciousness in this striving towards equality. I began by talking about the kind of educational con-

texts we create for children and whether we expect them to regurgitate, or to respond and engage. I can imagine how a typical elementary school teacher in Edmond Holmes' day might have "taught" his or her pupils Aesop's Fables, using the moral for each story as its key "learning point."

Certainly Aesop's sharp witty realism reflects "What Is" rather than "What Might Be." Yet his tales offer as much provocation to think as telling us what to think—surely the mark of a great storyteller. One of Aesop's tales is about how Tortoise gets bored of his life on the ground and desires to fly like a bird. He persuades Eagle to take him aloft but, as you can see in Piet Grobler's vivid illustration to my retelling (14), he comes a cropper when Eagle decides to drop him (see Figure 2). Aesop's characters don't get three chances. As a slave he would have learned that.



Figure 2. From "The eagle and the tortoise," p.15 of *Aesop's Fables* by Beverley Naidoo and Piet Grobler. Copyright © 2011 Piet Grobler. Reproduced with permission. Image courtesy Frances & Taylor publishers.

A couple of years ago, I told this tale to a group of children in a Cape Town bookshop and then invited them to "hot seat" me as the imperious Eagle. I was challenged by a feisty nine-year old: "Why doesn't Tortoise have a right to his dream?" She was wonderfully indignant at Eagle's indifference to another creature, proclaiming Tortoise's right to imagine and

his right to dream. In so doing, I felt that she was also proclaiming her own rights.

Despite the multitude of challenges to be faced in overcoming past and current injustices, what continues to give me hope in my birth country is that the spirit of striving for "What Might Be" is still very much alive. It is a spirit that I wanted to capture in



my poetry alphabet *S is for South Africa*. Rather than accompanying Prodeepta Das's photographs with prose, I chose to write short poems. Poetry offered me a dimension beyond the mere imparting of information—and

invites performance by its readers (see Figure 3).

IBBY continues to face huge challenges in ful-

filling Jella Lepman's founding mission. Amongst its most urgent concerns are those linked to children in war, reflected in its Children in Crisis fund. Many of you will know that IBBY has sponsored two libraries in the north and south of Gaza, one of which was completely destroyed by an Israeli rocket during the bombardment in July. The other was occupied by the military and left in disarray with windows and equipment broken. IBBY has pledged to rebuild and restore both libraries so that their books and stories can once again offer deeply traumatized children a way of linking to other children elsewhere and not to feel completely abandoned. For them, death has been a terrible presence.

I want to end by sharing with you a compliment paid by a Palestinian child to her former primary school in East Jerusalem after moving to secondary school. A short video made in this primary school in-

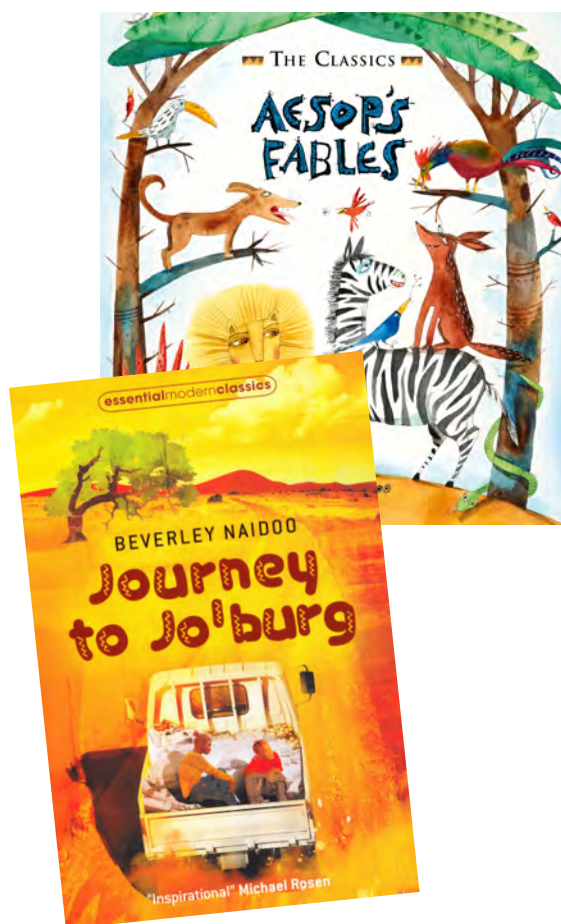


Figure 3. "F is for Faces," p.16 of *S is for South Africa* by Beverley Naidoo and Prodeepta Das. Copyright © Beverley Naidoo (text) and Prodeepta Das (photog.). image courtesy Frances Lincoln publishers.

dicates a creative, inclusive curriculum, with a strong focus on the arts.⁵ The head teacher speaks of a child who came to tell her,

At our new school, doors and windows are closed but at your school doors and windows are open.

This is a compliment indeed for a school in a city where its Palestinian inhabitants are totally stateless and without the most fundamental rights that you and I take for granted. Yet, in spite of the dire reality of "What Is," this child has experienced a school with a humane vision in which "doors and windows are open." What a tribute to the teachers who, in such circumstances, keep alive for young people their belonging to a wider humanity and the idea of "What Might Be." We can learn from them.



1. This paper was presented at the IBBY UK/NCRCL MA annual conference in November 2014. The accompanying PowerPoint presentation can be viewed at the conference archive on the IBBY UK website www.ibby.org.uk. All text reproduced from books authored by Beverley Naidoo are her copyright.

2. Ofsted is the UK-based Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. It carries out inspections and regulatory visits to schools throughout England and publishes the results online.

3. Dorothy Kuya was the first editor of the journal *Dragons Teeth*, published by the National Committee on Racism in Children's Books (London) from 1979 to 1992, when the journal ceased publication.

4. Rosemary Stones and Andrew Mann edited the *Children's Book Bulletin: For News of Progressive Moves in Children's Literature*, published by the Children's Rights Workshop (London), from 1979 to 1981, when the journal ceased publication.

5. Rawdat El-Zuhur, East Jerusalem www.rawdat.org.

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Why Not Hugs and Tugs Instead of Thugs?

People of Color Interacting Positively in Picture Books

René Saldaña Jr. and Elizabeth Isidro

On a Facebook post dated February 26, 2014, award-winning author-illustrator Don Tate writes, “Most interesting response from a student today, to my question: What is your favorite thing to draw? He answered: Thugs.”

Tate, who is African American, was touring Texas (USA) schools when he posted the above. During his presentations, Tate draws on easel pads for the children, thus inviting them into a greater discussion involving art and their place in it. He then literally invites children up to the easel to draw their own illustrations and to tell about their work. I have seen him trade autographed drawings with a young fellow artist after another such school visit.

Back to the *thug* response, though: I will be honest, when I first read the boy’s answer, my initial thought to my shame was, “The kid has to be black or Mexican American.” I know, how horrible of me to stereotype, my prejudice further compounded because I myself am brown-skinned. It is a case of the pot calling another pot black, or brown. But can you blame me, really? A kid of color hardly has a chance, awash like he is in the media’s glorification of the gangster lifestyle.

After the Trayvon Martin homicide in early 2012, the word *thug* took an ugly turn. It no longer referred to a punk kid, a hoodlum, a trouble-maker; it was now being applied to a punk kid of a specific race, namely black. In a follow-up question from me, Tate writes about the boy’s use of the word *thug*:

At first I was a tad bit offended. I don’t like the term ‘thug.’ It seems to have morphed into another derogatory term meaning, for many, lowly African American male. Almost interchangeable with the n-word. All that said, I quickly realized it was my hang up, not this kid’s who, I believe, answered very innocently with no harm intended. (Facebook Direct Message).

But race is very much at issue, whether intentionally meant or not. It is for me, anyway—I am the one whose initial reaction was to jump to conclusions. In answer to another question, Tate quickly dispelled my very skewed assumption about the boy in question: “[T]he kid who made that comment today was a square, clean-cut, nerdy-looking white kid” (Facebook Direct Message). I was summarily put in my place.

Nevertheless, I so had wanted it to be a boy of color who had said he liked drawing thugs. Then I could have made some earth-shattering statement about how the media is persistent in its feeding of such venomous portrayals of the underrepresented to a child’s detriment. The barrage, I could have argued, is non-stop, and so it only makes sense that, when asked what he would like to draw, instead of saying “butterflies and rockets and tigers and flowers,” as Tate was expecting (Facebook Direct Message), this supposed black or brown kid would naturally

say “thug” because that is what he is being subjected to at every turn: in film, in television, and in music. If only we educators and parents could counteract, if not outright negate, these destructive images our kids are being exposed to by instead sharing with them only positive representations of themselves. Oh, the wonders we could do!

But the boy was not black or brown. As it turns out, he was white. And I thought, “That’s the end of that. Time to get off that soap box.”

Except, of course, for this comment by author and illustrator Cheryl Johnson to Tate’s original post: “I looked quick and I saw hugs...or tugs.... haha.” Reading Johnson’s statement served as my true aha or earth-shattering moment. That boy, his race notwithstanding, no matter his socio-economic background, whether rural or urban, without having to think twice, told Tate that when he draws, he likes to draw thugs. When pressed by Tate to elaborate, the boy added, “Like the ones who get out of jail” (Facebook Direct Message). There was nothing romantic or glorified in the boy’s answer. This is a daily reality for this boy and so many more of our students. Tate tells me there was nothing but sincerity in the boy’s answer. Recall Tate’s earlier statement: the hang up was entirely his own and not the boy’s.

Sincere or not, as the father of children who read independently or listen to me read Tate’s work at home and as a teacher of future educators who will introduce Tate’s work to their students, the boy’s response still saddens me. That is his and countless other children’s experience. So disparate is their life and my own children’s. My heart breaks. Would that the boy’s answer had been “rainbows” or “little birdies chirping” or “daisies blooming in the spring.” And why not hugs and tugs in place of thugs? And can the simple act of exposing children to books that include references, textual and visual, to a more positive life of relationships really make a difference? Even a little one?

Well, why not? We have the resources as educators in the form of books. We have the eager audiences, as Tate’s presentations prove. Now all we need is to highlight for these young artists and readers titles about just such subjects in the hope that when Tate next asks that same question, someone—a boy or a girl; black, white, brown, or yellow; rich, poor, or middle class; rural or urban—will stand loud

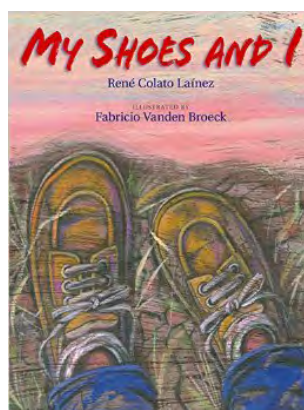
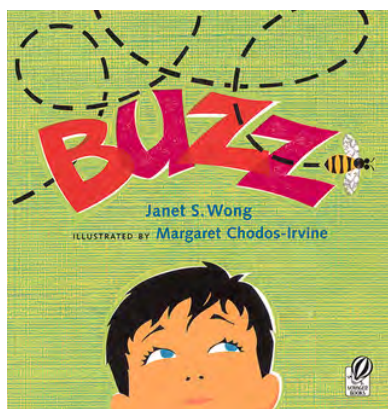
and proud to answer, without hesitation, “Mr. Tate, when I draw, I like to draw people hugging on each other and people tugging at each other.” Replacing the seemingly never-ending onslaught of negative representations of minority groups (including the economically and socially marginalized), we must provide to them—via read-alouds, book talks, and rich libraries from which to select titles—images of people expressing love, support, and friendship to one another.

Following is a list of picture books that showcase these sorts of public (and sometimes private) displays of affection.

Alma Flor Ada’s *Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English* is a bilingual collection of poems documenting the lives of migrant laborer families. Expertly illustrated by Simón Silva, the book captures the essence of this particular community. In one illustration, parents dream of better lives for their children: around the dinner table one evening, Mother wraps her arms around her son, passing down to him the tradition of making *tortillas*, while Father sits with his daughter at the dinner table, arm around her, a hand holding a book open, helping her to finish her homework. The accompanying poem is titled “Pride.” It reads, “Proud of my family / proud of my language / proud of my culture / proud of my people / proud of being who I am.” The hugging in this case conveys security in the face of hardships—an assurance that through hard work and dedication, even the insurmountable can be overcome. In another spread, Brother and Sister now prepare for bed after a long day in the fields. The poem linked to this image reads in part, “Honor is a family / who loves and cares for one another.” It is through familial touch—arms wrapped around one another—that the children understand the love their parents have for them.

In *Ron’s Big Mission*, Rosa Blue, Corinne J. Naden, and illustrator Don Tate tell the story of American astronaut Ron McNair who early in life dreamed of one day flying airplanes. One problem posed itself: he was growing up in South Carolina (USA) during the 1950s, when Black children were not allowed to own a library card, much less dream of reaching for the stars. But little Ron knows that to attain his dream, he will need to expand his knowledge. This means standing up to the system that sets these societal perimeters. On the day he makes his stand,

CHILDREN & THEIR BOOKS: WHY NOT HUGS AND TUGS INSTEAD OF THUGS?
PEOPLE OF COLOR INTERACTING POSITIVELY IN PICTURE BOOKS



he hugs his books tight to his chest and tells his mother, “It’s wrong. The rules are not fair. Why can’t I check out books like everyone else?” The librarian knows little Ron is her best customer and prints him his very own library card. On their way home, a pleased Mrs. McNair places a hand on little Ron’s shoulder while he points at a plane in the sky. He now realizes the dream is attainable. This simple act, a hand on a child’s shoulder, shows the pride a parent feels when her child takes his own giant leap.

René Colato Laínez’s *My Shoes and I* is one of immigration. Mario and Papá are headed north to America to meet up with Mario’s mother, who recently has sent the boy a new pair of shoes for the journey ahead. The boy thinks, “But no matter how long the trip will be, I will get there. My shoes will take me anywhere.” The trip proves dangerous and long. On the journey, Mario’s shoes suffer from wear and tear. Crossing the river, the boy slings the shoes over his shoulder, but the current catches him unawares and the shoes float away from him. He

rescues one, but the other is long gone, or so he thinks. Up a ways, caught in branches in the river, is the other shoe. More importantly, on the other side, “Mamá is waiting for us. We hug. We kiss. We cry for joy.” The hug Mamá and Mario share is about love coming together again.

Back of the Bus is Aaron Reynolds and illustrator Floyd Cooper’s rendition of that fateful day in America that would help define a movement that would change the nation. In it, Reynolds and Cooper recount the story of Mrs. Rosa Parks through the eyes of a boy who does not realize the gravity of what is unfolding, though he knows enough to hush when his mother says to. There is talk of calling the police, and the bus stays put. “We sit and sit, not goin’ no place,” the boy says. “Nothin’ to do but sweat” and play with his marble. “Put it away, child,” his mother commands. The boy complies, burying the marble deep in his pocket because he hears “Mama’s crinkled-up somethin’s-wrong voice.” The policeman arrives and Mrs. Parks is not budging, so

the officer budges her, cuffs her, and then pulls her from the bus. His mother says Mrs. Parks is “stirrin’ up a nest of hornets,” but now the boy sees that his mother’s is not a look of fear: “she’s got Mrs. Parks’ lightin’-storm eyes now.” In that moment of shakiness, the boy feels his mother’s resolute strength and Mrs. Parks’ unbendable determination. He also feels his mother’s “little chin” on the top of his head as she wraps her resilient arms around her child.

In *Ellington Was Not a Street*, Ntozake Shange and illustrator Kadir Nelson breathe life back into the causes of African American men who made their culture proud. Narrated in free verse through the eyes of a little girl, she is pictured inside different parts of the house while she and her daddy welcome into their home the various “men who changed the world”—among them are Paul Robeson, Dizzy Gillespie, and W. E. B. DuBois. Do not be deceived. This house is no ordinary house, for the “windows were not cement or steel” and the “doors opened like daddy’s arms.” Readers feel the safety and love Daddy has for his children as he sits on his heels and holds them in his arms. It is in this loving embrace that a nurturing of that cultural pride is revealed. The child in Janet S. Wong and illustrator Margaret Chodos-Irvine’s *Buzz* begins the day by waking to the buzzing of a bee, and thus readers are invited to join in on listening to a morning full of other buzzing sounds along with our narrator. “Buzz,” says the clock. “Buzz,” says Daddy’s silver razor. “Buzz,” says Mommy’s blender. But both parents’ busy day cannot really begin until Grandma arrives to watch the child. When she does, she buzzes the ringer, and there is nothing more precious than seeing a hello hug and kiss for Grandma and a good-bye hug and kiss for Mommy. This simple heartwarming story of children left in a grandparent’s care is more a buzzing reality in present day.

Portrayed in linocut illustrations, Hyewon Yum’s wordless picture book, *Last Night*, presents a version of the classic case of a child who refuses to eat her supper. The little girl is then sent to her room where she falls into a fitful sleep. She awakens into a dreamland forest adventure with her teddy bear, who has magically come to life. Forgetting her earlier rebellion, she plays all night with other forest animals. Eventually, she ends up exhausted and still troubled. When she wakes up out of her dream, she realizes her earlier mistake and rushes out of her room to find

her mother. The final page is rendered in bright hues highlighting that the little girl discovers ultimate refuge in her mother’s welcoming and forgiving embrace, symbolic of a parent’s unconditional love for his or her child.

In Marla Frazee’s *Roller Coaster*, a reluctant protagonist and her older brother are visiting a theme park. First item on the agenda for the day and the reason for the girl’s hesitancy is her first roller coaster ride. In line waiting their turn, the girl grows more and more nervous. Disappointed when she is “tall enough to ride” by a good two inches, she trudges on. And now, it is their turn and she is still looking for a way out, but her brother tugs on her, pulling her into the front car. The ride does not disappoint. Instead of shutting her eyes tight and screaming in fear like others on the ride, our hero is screaming in joy with her arms up in the air. It turns into a ride like no other, except for one: the ride on her brother’s back as she points to the end of the line because she is “planning / to ride the roller coaster again... / right now!”

I am not so naïve to think that this simple act of introducing children to positive images of family and friends hugging and tugging on each other will dramatically change lives altogether. But I am not so cynical either to think that my only responsibility in the classroom is to teach and not to reach my students. I am an educator, after all, and though it is a cliché, I believe in it sincerely—that if a teacher can affect positively the life of one child, just one, then all those years of service will have not been misspent. Teachers in America have 180 days every year for however many years they are in the classroom to reach not just one but countless children like the one Don Tate encountered that day in Texas.

If we can introduce a boy or a girl to another world filled with positive interactions in addition to their daily one and they in turn make room for the alternative, we can leave the job with our heads held high and our hearts swelling from joy because our students will have a clearer understanding of the power of hugs and tugs—even when they are given to and by “thugs.”

As educators, we cannot control how a child’s life unfolds daily outside of our classroom’s walls, but we sure can do all that we can within them—our time together in class serving as an extended hug or tug on our kids.

Photo: Ileana García-Spitz



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Eliza Beth i. iSidro is a doctoral student at Texas Tech University. While pursuing a degree in Curriculum & Instruction she also teaches Children's Literature classes in the undergraduate level. During her spare time, she paints, writes poetry, and plays the guitar.

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Ghana Libraries Celebrate 25 Successful Years

Deborah Cowley



Kathy Knowles' first permanent library transformed from a used shipping container

It was twenty-five years ago that Canadian Kathy Knowles carried a basket of books into her garden in Accra, Ghana, sat under a red Flamboyant tree, and read stories to six neighborhood children. Word spread quickly about this small reading circle. After each session, more and more curious children turned up, begging to hear the stories. Before she knew it, there were seventy children sitting under her tree, enthralled.

Kathy quickly realized that children in Ghana clearly enjoyed hearing these stories but had little access to books. As the numbers continued to soar, she knew she had to find a way to accommodate more children. She discussed it with her husband, and together, they came up with a novel solution: she emptied their garage; installed shelves, small tables, and chairs; covered the walls with colorful posters; and asked any traveler from Canada to tuck children's books into their luggage. She also trained her housekeeper, Joanna Felih, to help run the small library, which she named the Osu Avenue Library after the name of her street.

The tiny library opened for two hours on Monday and Thursday afternoons. On library days, Joanna sat under a mango tree beside the entrance to welcome the children and jot down their names. After three months, membership reached 150 children—almost all of them Ghanaian. Kathy not only offered them a wide selection of books but she introduced African drumming and dancing instruction, as well as writing and drawing exercises. She also hired a young Ghanaian university student to read stories to the children. These regular story times would become a popular component of all her libraries. “I loved watching how the children responded to the stories and how they were drawn into the larger world of books,” said Kathy. “Their appetite for reading and writing was insatiable.”

Today, 25 years later, what began with those six children under a tree has grown into a far-reaching organization—the Osu Children's Library Fund (OCLF), proud winner of the 2010 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award. Thanks to the vision, initiative, and untiring energy of Kathy Knowles, its founder and director, the Fund has built eight large community libraries in impoverished corners of Greater Accra. The most recent opened in Korle Gonno in November 2014, and another is already

on the horizon. It is clear that these libraries are filling a huge need: last year alone (2014), library staff recorded 285,000 visits to OCLF's libraries in Accra. Kathy has also given assistance to more than 200 smaller initiatives around Ghana and in other African countries.

As more libraries attracted more children, Kathy soon recognized the serious lack of culturally relevant books for African children. To rectify this, she used her photographic skills to create a vibrant publishing venture that has so far published forty photo-illustrated books that have delighted children in many African countries. Most of the books are in English, but some have been translated into other languages: four Ghanaian languages, Swahili (for Tanzania), Diola (for Burkina Faso), Portuguese (for Mozambique), and Creole (for Haiti). Two were printed in a Chinese/English edition.

A Life-Changing Meeting

In March 2000, I had the good fortune to receive a commission from *Reader's Digest* to travel to Ghana to interview Kathy and write about the project she had so successfully brought to life. I had already read about the former British colony, known then as the Gold Coast, which lies in West Africa between the Ivory Coast and Togo. The country had gained its independence from Britain on 6 March, 1957 when the new nation's president, Kwame Nkrumah, was sworn into power. Just 47, he was a true visionary, a strong proponent of African unity, promising prosperity and hope for the whole continent. But the euphoria was not to last. There was a period of notable successes before power went to his head and, in 1966, he was deposed in a coup and died in exile. There followed two decades of coups and counter-coups before the country began to enjoy relative stability. By the time I arrived in 2000, Ghana had embraced a working democracy.

I was vaguely familiar with much of Ghana's history but knew little about Kathy before we met at Accra's Kotoka airport that March. I did know that, barely 45, she had already done more in her short life than most people twice her age. How she managed to accomplish so much was a mystery, given the intense heat and humidity of that country as well as the never-ending uncertainties, congested traffic, and the many challenges of working in that part of the world. I would soon find out.

In the ten long days that I spent with her back then—and the fifteen visits I have made with her subsequently—I was able to observe her skill in navigating the seemingly endless obstacles, her patience in the face of the most daunting bureaucracy, and her remarkable empathy for Africans.

Kathy had originally traveled to Ghana in 1989 when her husband, John, had landed a job as an accountant with a mining company. When the job ended three years later, she very reluctantly made ready to pack up the family and move back to Canada. Since they lived in rented accommodation, this meant closing her tiny Osu Avenue Library. She was devastated to think of disappointing so many children so she spent many long hours thinking of a way to provide something more permanent for the eager young readers.

After a seemingly endless search, she was finally given a small piece of land in Osu, a downtown section of the capital, Accra. She then purchased a used shipping container for US\$1200 and recruited a team of volunteers to help raise the roof, cut out doors and windows, install ceiling fans, and paint the whole thing bright blue, her favorite color. Next, she moved in their small tables, stools, shelves, and books. Without hesitation, she put Joanna in charge and, on November 13, 1992, she opened the sparkling new Osu Library, her first permanent library. At the insistence of her Ghanaian Board members, it has since been named the Kathy Knowles Community Library and has become a well-known landmark in the city, especially after being featured in the popular Bradt Guide to Ghana.

Important Guidelines

I arrived in Ghana in 2000 and that first library—often referred to as “the container library”—was flourishing with non-stop activities and a steady stream of children coming and going. By then, there was also a second library in Nima, bordering a vast slum area in the city.

Most of the library’s young patrons could understand English, which is widely spoken in Ghana, but the children had few opportunities to read storybooks and were not sure how to handle them. So Kathy and Joanna set strict guidelines from the start. Members had to remove their shoes on entering the library and wash and dry their hands before touching the books. They were taught how

to turn the pages, carefully from the top right-hand corner: “We were determined to teach the children to care for the books and to respect them.”

Important too was Kathy’s wisdom in partnering with the local authorities, in this case the Accra Municipal Assembly (AMA). Before any library is built, she insists on receiving a signed agreement from the AMA that they will pay staff salaries—OCLF staff members now reach seventy—plus all electricity and water bills. Making this happen requires constant visits and supreme patience, but this partnership provides the sustainability that Kathy believes is vitally important.

As news of Kathy’s libraries spread, schoolteachers from villages far from the capital came to seek help in setting up their own libraries. Therefore, in 1998, she designed a three-week training course run by Joanna. This outreach program has since helped launch libraries in more than eighty schools and dozens of communities across Ghana. Librarians from Zimbabwe, Benin, and Tanzania have also visited Ghana to benefit from this training.

In 1993, when the Knowles family returned to Canada, Kathy feared that her project would founder. She need not have worried. Determined to continue nourishing her literacy programs, she set up the Osu Children’s Library Fund and its Ghanaian partner, the Osu Library Fund, as registered Canadian and Ghanaian charities. Her well-trained staff in Ghana sent her regular monthly reports. She also named two Ghanaian headmistresses to act as directors and local fund-raisers for the organization. Director Florence Adjepong says, “Kathy always gives people the means to help themselves. That’s why things worked, even though she was thousands of miles away in Canada.”

All Kathy’s libraries have developed in different ways. At the Nima Library, bordering a huge slum area in central Accra, there has been a stamp club, a wildlife club, a choir, and a book club. One library includes a hugely popular theatre with a non-stop succession of plays as well as drumming and dancing performances. Three libraries run free, twice-weekly literacy classes where mothers, grandmothers, teens, and school dropouts often cross the city for a chance to learn to read and write. Kathy comments, “It’s magical to watch the faces of these people light up when they say ‘I can read.’”

Working from Her Attic Office

Kathy runs the Ghanaian library project from the attic of her Winnipeg home and proudly claims her overhead is well under 2%. She receives no government support, but donations from hundreds of loyal donors across Canada and the US mount to around C\$350,000 a year. A small team of volunteers receives, documents, and answers the large volume of mail that arrives each day. In the past, they also handled thousands of donated books that needed to be cleaned, sorted, and packed for shipment. Now that good quality and culturally relevant books are more readily available in Ghana, she prefers to buy there to support the local economy and avoid heavy shipping costs.

It is always an experience to travel with Kathy, and I have enjoyed dozens of trips with her. With the car stuffed with boxes of books, games, and puzzles, we have visited every corner of the country—sometimes on paved roads, more often on dusty, pot-holed ones that lead to a remote library she had launched. We have driven the eight hour stretch north to Tamale, once a sleepy town with more bicycles than cars, and wended our way across its surrounding countryside to visit half a dozen village libraries she has helped. We have traveled two hours further to the town of Bolgatanga, the northern-most tip of Ghana, to visit still more libraries.

One memorable trip was to Wisdom of Wisdom School perched atop a small mountain in the lush Volta Region and within sight of Togo, Ghana's eastern-most neighbor. Kathy had once donated books to their small library. The staff reported regularly on the children's progress, so she felt another visit was warranted.

The journey up to the village was a major challenge. As we drove upwards, the road became narrower and, eventually, was little more than a deeply-rutted pathway. When we finally were in sight of the top, a large cluster of children spotted the car and began waving paper flags and singing a song of welcome. Head librarian Emmanuel took us to pay our respects to the chief, then led us back to a courtyard beside their tiny one-room library where more than a hundred children sat waiting patiently for a sign from their teacher to burst into song—first in English and then in French.

True to form, Kathy read them a story. And

another. She then asked them to name their favorite books. Dozens of hands shot up. After more stories and more songs, she thanked them for their warm welcome and presented them with a box of books and puzzles. As our car pulled away, we could see there were tears among many of the children as they waved goodbye. They were still waving as we inched our way down the treacherous pathway.

A few months after our visit, we learned from Emmanuel that, thanks to our help and the books we had sent, the lives of those children have improved dramatically, especially in their final examination results: "Before the library, not one child could make an 'A' in English," he wrote "but now many can. And the most wonderful news of all is that our school was just awarded the best in the district!"

Kathy and I talked often about that visit and about the small successes that happen in the most unlikely corners—this time, in a tiny village miles from anywhere. "It shows that, with a small amount of money and a few books, you can make such a huge difference," said Kathy.

Back in Accra, we stopped by several government schools which Kathy had already helped. The reception was the same at every stop: a gaggle of excited youngsters would welcome us like royalty, greeting "Madam Katty" with a song, a poem, a bouquet of wildflowers. Within minutes of our arrival, Kathy would perch herself on a stool, take out a book, and read a story while the children sat on floor mats in front of her, captivated. Then she would ask them to name their favorite storybooks. Eager hands would wave as they shouted out their different titles. "That's *wonderful*", beamed a proud Kathy at one point, then turning to me, she said: "A year ago, these children had never seen a storybook. In fact, many of them could not even read. Just look at them now!" This was the pattern for many of my visits: lunching on roadside snacks of roasted plantains or deep fried yams and sharing in the delight of so many kids who, thanks to "Madam Katty," had come under the spell of books.

I returned to Canada after that first visit to Ghana and wrote my story. But I found I could not stop thinking about all those children becoming so excited by their discovery of books. Nor could I stop thinking about the remarkable Ghanaian people I had met—their kindness, their warmth, their generosity of spirit—often struggling against

overwhelming odds. I decided to offer my help.

Two years later, Kathy asked me to travel with her back to Ghana to give her a hand with a new library project. I jumped at the chance. More library visits, more delighted children, and more moving tributes to our “Canadian angel.” Back in Canada, I had begun to help with fund-raising, correspondence, grant proposals, anything Kathy handed me. I continued to be involved on both continents until a surprise request came from Kathy in 2006. Would I like to spend three months in Ghana to oversee a library project that she wanted to complete before the visit of Canada’s Governor General, Michaëlle Jean? The decision was an easy one: I was more than happy to accept the challenge.

In November 2015, I will be making my sixteenth trip to Ghana. We are already planning celebrations to recognize OCLF’s 25 years and to salute all the people in Canada and in Ghana who have supported us through that period. We will also be looking forward to the future and to the opportunity of giving many more children in Africa the chance to know the joy of reading.



deBorah Co Wley is a Canadian journalist and author of five books. Her most recent book, *The Library Tree*, is about Kathy Knowles and the development of her literacy project in Ghana. It is published in Canada by Great Plains Publishing and is available, also as a *kindle* edition, from Amazon. More information about the Osu Children’s Library Fund can be found on the OCLF website www.osuchildrenslibraryfund.ca.

To Carry Across an Elephant:

Translating a Children's Poem

By Steven Withrow,

with contributions by Julie Larios, Alma Flor Ada, Robert Schechter, Petros Panaou,
Philip de Vos, Gaelle Tardivat, Vittorio Papetti, and Rosalma Zubizarreta



Steven Withrow is a poet, author, and teacher from Falmouth, Massachusetts, USA. He has taught courses in children's literature and creative writing at Rhode Island School of Design and Suffolk University and has lectured at schools, libraries, and museums across North America. He is producer of the documentary film *Library of the Early Mind: A grown-up look at children's literature*. His eight published books include *Illustrating Children's Picture Books* and *Character Design for Graphic Novels*. He is the founder of Poetry Advocates for Children & Young Adults. His poems have appeared in journals and anthologies worldwide, most recently in the *National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry* and *The Poetry Friday* anthologies. He studied writing, literature, and publishing at Roger Williams University and Emerson College.

While the subject of translating poems for adults between modern languages is common worldwide, critical study of the artistic methods and challenges of translating poems for children remains rare across popular and academic literatures. Here is one such study.

In my short poem "Circus Elephant," written days before Ringling Bros. announced it will retire its elephants to a conservation center by 2018, a lone pachyderm is poised on a pedestal:

Seven tons of
Everest gray

Stationed on a
Sturdy stool

Twirling circles
Round her trunk

Cunning as a
Mountain monk

Despite the elephant's captivity, she is in control here: immense and immovable, deft and balletic. How do we know this? If I have done my job as a poet, then the words in this precise arrangement provide evidence outright and give us clues to what is unstated. In the second stanza, for instance, *stationed* suggests having been placed rather than merely standing. In the third stanza, I see the elephant juggling rings, yet any circular trick is possible. In the fourth stanza, *cunning* refers to her trunk (and the el-

ephant as a whole) as agile, dexterous, able, or artful. The secondary meaning of slippery or sly is there as well.

I could go on about denotation and connotation, overtone and undertone, or rhythm and sound, and normally, in a lecture or article I would stop here, having shared the gist of the process. However, if one is to translate (literally *carry across*) my poem from English to another language, then he or she must engage with every particle of the poem. Deep, close, careful reading and rereading of the original and translated drafts are essential, as is consulting excellent dictionaries in both languages. These are parts of the translator's method, but not all. Composing a translation that moves beyond a hastily constructed, word-for-word trot is a creative act, an artistic form in itself. Honoring the spirit of the poem requires a patient, painstaking, sensitive, imaginative translator who thinks and acts as a poet. A good translation balances craft and inspiration.

To demonstrate varying approaches, which are as unfixed and individual to each translator as the initial process was to the poet, I have asked bilingual friends of mine who write for children to share their translations of "Circus Elephant" along with their notes.

Spanish Version by Julie Larios

Translation is no small task, Steven. Even with a small poem, there are language issues (or there should be!) of rhyme, meter, alliteration, everything that makes poetry step away from prose, including a cultural frame of reference that pits familiarity against surprise. It's not too hard to translate a poem

if these things are jettisoned, but then the poem is no longer a poem, is it? All the music of it gets lost, and I know you care about the music. That said, here is a literal translation to Spanish, much the poorer, but I assume you would like something quickly...

"Elefante del circo"

Siete toneladas
de un gris de Everest

balanceada
en un banquito fuerte

haciendo circulos
con su trompa

astuta como
un monje montañes

That's it, only there's no joyful rhyme, no metrical pattern, no real sound patterns. A careful translation would look for slight adjustments in content between the Spanish and the English, I think, in order to hang on to more of the music of the original. If I were writing about translation, my bottom line would always be about the way it fails!

You know what I think is really lacking in translated work? An expansive translator's note to explain the little (or big) losses and to offer explanations about choices that were available—the why behind final choices. Then the translated work would become fascinating, no? It drives me crazy when there's no translator's note, not even a brief one.

I do feel very sure that poets who attempt translation work become better poets because of it, for two reasons: first, a translator has to slow down and think about words (often hard in his or her native language, where word choice is too facile and results too often in clichés); second, a translator becomes aware of how truly strange his or her own language is—its beauties, its limitations.

So I'm a great fan of translation work that's well done, but I guess I'm a bit of a pessimist about how consistently any translator can capture the sound of the original. If poetry equals sound plus image plus idea, then translations are automatically in danger of missing a third of the equation!

-- Julie Larios

Spanish Version by Alma Flor Ada

Translating poetry is always a difficult challenge. The shorter the lines of the English poem, the greater the challenge, since Spanish words tend to be longer and the language does not allow for the synthesis possible in English. With that said, here are the options I suggest. Please notice that verse lines are not capitalized in contemporary Spanish poetry.

Title

"Elefante del circo" suggests she belongs in the circus. I prefer "Elefante en el circo," which suggests the elephant is kept or lives in the circus.

Stanza 1

These two versions maintain the reference to Everest (important for the reference to the monk in the last stanza):

Siete toneladas [Seven gray tons from Everest]
grises del Everest

A nicer-sounding option is,

Siete toneladas [Seven gray tons from Everest]
del gris Everest

This next option is further from the original and loses the reference to Everest, but the sound is very nice, and there is a nice alliteration on *granito gris*:

Siete toneladas [Seven tons of gray granite]
de granito gris

Stanza 2

This is the exact translation, not necessarily very poetic. Please notice that *estacionado* (whether acting as past participle or adjective) has dual endings; there is no way to make it neuter. It is either *estacionado* for a male or *estacionada* for a female. It is good to know the elephant is female.

estacionada
en un taburete sólido

The following version has a nice sound. There is no way to refer to the elephant as a neuter "it." Using "la" indicates the elephant is female.

un taburete sólido [A sturdy stool
la sostiene supports it (her)]

This last would be my preferred version for this stanza. It focuses on the elephant as the acting character. *Parada* indicates it is a female.

parada en un [Standing on a
sólido taburete sturdy stool]

Stanza 3

mientras su trompa [While her trunk]
baila girando [dances in circles]

Alternately,

mientras su trompa [While her trunk]
baila y gira [dances and circles]

Stanza 4

If the reference to the monk is necessary, here are two options:

trompa ágil [Agile trunk]
como monje de [as a mountain monk]
montaña

trompa ágil y diestra [Agile and dexterous
trunk]

como monje de [as a mountain monk]
montaña

I prefer this last option. It is a little longer, and this contributes to giving a feeling of conclusion to the poem.

trompa ágil y diestra [Agile and dexterous
trunk]

como un monje en [as a monk in
la montaña the mountain]

If the reference to the monk is not necessary, this next option could be a good possibility. There is a nice alliteration in *trompa traviesa* and a rhyme of vowels, which is an important form of rhyme in Spanish, between *traviesa* and *diestra*.

trompa traviesa [Mischievous trunk]
ágil y diestra [cunning and dexterous]

Here is my suggested version of the poem in Spanish:

“Elefante en el circo”

Siete toneladas
de granito gris

parada en un
sólido taburete

mientras su trompa
baila girando

trompa traviesa
ágil y diestra

— *Alma Flor Ada*

Notes from Robert Schechter

Unfortunately, I do not translate into Spanish, only from Spanish to English. My command of Spanish is not nearly good enough for me to write poems in it. It's fairly unusual for literary translators to be able to go in either direction, even among those with native fluency in both languages, though Rhina Espaillat comes to mind as someone who manages that trick. Her sonnets in particular are superb.

I prefer a translator who tries to solve formal problems within the translation itself, and a discussion of how to go about doing so would include the extents to which a translator might go to change the poem in other ways to preserve at least a certain degree of rhyme and meter. For me, the goal is always to create a self-sufficient poem in the target language, not to create a study guide that lets us discuss the original or refer back to it. People who know the original language don't need the translation.

In Spanish, it is common to write in syllabics, and to the native ear in Spanish the effect is far more evident and musical than in syllabics in English. Also, in Spanish not only are there more available standard rhymes than in English but the possibilities are practically endless since you can also choose to write in assonantal rhymes—rhymes which register forcefully to a native Spanish ear, much more than their English equivalents. This is something that most nonnative readers don't even notice, just as they don't notice the poem is metrical. It's also something that is probably impossible to duplicate in English, though maybe someday someone will.

Greek Version by Petros Panaou

I tried to imitate your style as much as possible. "Ee" is supposed to sound like the "e" in "elephant" throughout the poem, and "i" is supposed to sound like the "i" in "simple." I believe I succeeded in terms of how it sounds, but I was not able to use exactly five words in every stanza. I also diverted a bit from the original meaning in the last stanza as I was trying to get the rhyming right. The last two stanzas would translate back into English (word for word) as follows:

On her trunk
Circles are rotating

The eyes with
A monk's cunning are shining

"Ελεφαντίνα στο Τσίρκο"

Εφτά τόνοι από
Έβερεστ γκρι

Στέκεται σε
Σταθερό σκαμνί

Στην προβοσκίδα της
Κύκλοι γυρίζουν

Τα μάτια με
Πονηριά μοναχού λαμπυρίζουν

"Elephantina sto Tsirko"

Efta toni apo
Everest gri

Stekete se
Stathero skamni

Stin provoskida tis
Kikli girizoun

Ta matia me
Poniria monachou lampirizoun

— *Petros Panaou*

Afrikaans Version by Philip de Vos

In your first four lines, I like the idea of the enormous elephant on a mere stool, and I also like the alliterations in stationed, sturdy, and stool as well as in mountain and monk. I translated the verse into Afrikaans, and because I used rhyme, the meaning of the poem has now changed somewhat.

"Sirkus-Olifant"

Groot en gryse
Everest.
Is so 'n stoel
vir jou bedoel?

Jou slurp
moet sirkels
draai en draai
en só word grootheid
hier verraa.

Here, line by line, is what it now means:

"Circus Elephant"

Enormous and grey
Everest.
Is a chair like this
really meant for you?

Your trunk
must twirl circles
round and round.
And in this way
your greatness
has been betrayed.

— *Philip de Vos*

French Version by Gaelle Tardivat

“Éléphant de cirque”

Sept tonnes de
gris anthracite

campées sur un
tabouret robuste

faisant tourner des cerceaux
autour de sa trompe

rusée comme un
moine des montagnes

— *Gaelle Tardivat*

Italian Version by Vittorio Papetti

“L’Elefante Circense”

Sette tonnellate di
grigio Everest

erte su di un
robusto trespolo

cerchi concentrici
piroettanti sulla proboscide

scaltro come un
monaco alpino

— *Vittorio Papetti*

My Own Reflection

For most monolingual readers, judging the quality of a translation is less a matter of comparing the original to the new version (which requires fluency in both languages) and more a matter of *experiencing* the translated version and then, over time, *evaluating* what was chosen and what is suggested.

You do not need to read the original poem to immerse yourself in the translation. That said, a good translator’s note (as Julie Larios recommends above) can help enormously in connecting the translation to—and differentiating it from—its source. If you are able to read both versions, you might consider writ-

ing your own reader’s note to supplement or serve as a translator’s note. You might also share your own translation of the poem. Future readers will be grateful; it is an intriguing process. So, immerse yourself then ask, Does the translation have a sense of unity and symmetry? Does it have a definable form of its own? Does the language feel lifeless in a forced march to carry across the meaning? Or does it exhibit its own evocative tonality when you say it aloud? Has the translator lifted the words above the literal?

You can read superb examples of children’s poems translated into English in the works of Michio Mado (*The Animals* and *The Magic Pocket*), translated by Empress Michiko of Japan. Another classic is *Lullabies, Lyrics and Galloways Songs* by Christian Morgenstern, translated from German by Anthea Bell. My new favorite is *A Little Bitty Man and Other Poems for the Very Young* by Halfdan Rasmussen, translated from Danish by Marilyn Nelson and Pamela Espeland. For those learning Spanish, bilingual poetry books by Alma Flor Ada, Isabel Campoy, Francisco X. Alarcón, Jorge Argueta, and others provide the pleasure and challenge of reading two versions of the poem side-by-side, each pair by the same author.

Taking back my “Circus Elephant” after its travels through Spanish, Greek, Afrikaans, Italian, and French arenas, I wonder how a Norwegian, Mandarin, Arabic, Japanese, Hebrew, Bengali, Inuit, Swahili, Hungarian, or Brazilian Portuguese version might look and sound. My poem has enjoyed these journeys and incarnations, and I feel honored to have talented writers help carry my elephant across the wide river at the confluence of all languages.

From “Learning the Art of Translation” in *Alma Flor Ada and You (Vol. II)* by Rosalma Zubizarreta

“The heart of the art of translation, I feel, is to listen carefully for the shades of meaning in the original text, the feel of the words, the intention of the author, so that we can then re-create that meaning and intention in another language. Next we need to listen carefully to what we have just written: Does it sound natural? Is that how a native speaker would say it? Does it convey adequately enough the richness of the original text?”

“When I’m creating an English-language version of a poem or song that was written originally in Spanish, it often feels like I’m working on a puzzle.

There are so many different elements that need to be attended to! Not just the meaning of the words, but also their sound, their rhythm, their mood. At the same time, I very much enjoy the challenge, and there is a wonderful feeling of satisfaction when I finally come up with something that feels like a good fit.”

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Around the World in 70 Maps

The International Youth Library Presents a
New Traveling Exhibition Featuring
Three Centuries of Cartographic Treasures
from Children's Literature

Jochen Weber

Maps are a special kind of functional literature that depicts the world in its entirety or in segments of continents, countries, oceans, mountains, islands, cities, buildings, travel routes, and much more. Yet they are more than merely useful—they are so fascinating to us because they convey history and traditions, document scientific knowledge, and visualize power relations. They lead and accompany us to unknown regions, stir our curiosity, and invite us to discover the world as we trace along their surfaces with our fingers. However, no matter how detailed and precise they aim to be, maps are never representations of “reality” but rather two-dimensional representations of how people imagine the world to be, how they perceive it and give it structure, and how they orient themselves in it, as well as what they choose to value. Sites are mapped for the purpose of making them easier to grasp and to make them more comprehensible. At the same time, they are shaped by the perspectives of the person who commissioned the map and of the map maker.

When one asks children's book experts about maps in books for young readers, one is often met

with blank stares. Some might first think of maps in non-fiction books, where they are sometimes a necessary means of transmitting information. But maps in novels or picture books? After some reflection, they might wager some initial suggestions: Isn't there a map featured in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*? What about the novels of Jules Verne, the travelogues of Joachim Heinrich Campe, or one of the first true children's book classics, Johann David Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson*? *Winnie the Pooh*, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, Tove Jansson's Moomin books, and not least, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* might round out their listing efforts.

Even these few samples show that maps in children's and young adult books are not all that uncommon. Perhaps they are undervalued, considered unimportant supplemental material, or simply overlooked because they appear on the endpapers of a book or are tucked away as folded maps.

Since maps in children's and young adult literature have a long history and are surprisingly diverse, a plan emerged in the International Youth Library two years ago to develop an exhibition documenting that tradition and diversity, as well as promoting maps as a special kind of book illustration. Research to

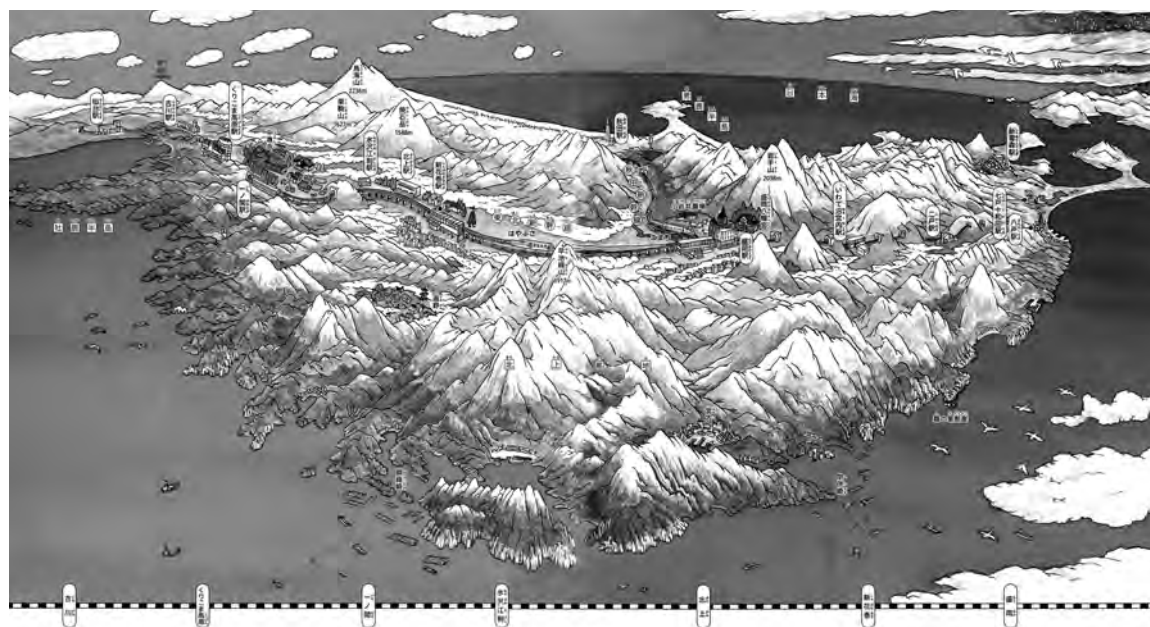
assemble the exhibition proved itself to be relatively challenging as there is as yet no specialist literature covering the field. In addition, libraries only rarely note maps in their cataloguing, and keyword searches in library catalogues lead nowhere. The hunt for material to exhibit thus relied heavily on library staff recollections and memories of having seen maps in particular books, sifting through book shelves meter after meter, and leafing through countless books until cartographic treasures gradually surfaced.

When one looks at maps featured in children's and young adult books more closely, the great range of map types and representational styles becomes evident. For instance, albeit quite rarely, there are maps made in the style of conventional political or topographical maps. They depict geographical realms in two-dimensional form, where the reader looks down at the landscape directly from above at a ninety degree angle, and they mainly rely on drawn lines, marked areas, colors, symbols, and written notations. Most maps in children's and young adult books, in fact, mix conventional maps with book illustration; they reveal more detail, show landscapes, people, animals, and buildings, and they often have a clearly narrative form and function to the degree that they incorporate plot events. In many of these maps, the observer looks on what is being represented at a forty-five degree angle—that is, from a bird's eye or

airplane perspective—which makes the represented more or less three dimensional (i.e., realistically spatial). On the whole, whether precise and detailed, sketch-like, or painterly and expressive; modest black-and-white drawings or large, colorful panoramas; "classic" or experimental; matter-of-fact and down-to-earth or playful and wild—all maps invite their readers to embark on imagined travels; to dive into real and fantastical worlds; and to chart their own actual surroundings, their dream worlds, and their inner worlds.

The maps featured in the International Youth Library's exhibition can be divided into three groups: At one end, there are maps of the known world—countries, continents, valleys, islands, cities, or even buildings. At the other end, there are maps of completely invented fantasy worlds. The group in between consists of maps of fictional places, which are purported to really exist somewhere in the real world not exactly located in the book.

The first group primarily includes maps from non-fiction books. Some use the somewhat austere political or topographical map-style described above. The illustrators usually restrict their maps to conveying basic information like borders, large cities, distinctive mountains, and waterways. That said, they often imbue pictorial elements with informative as well as decorative significance. Sometimes, little vi-



From the Japanese picture book Shinkansen No Tabi

gnettes show examples of fauna and flora, cityscapes, single buildings, and other sights and native customs or references to historical events. Some maps are very successful at drawing an original, lively picture of the geographical region they are depicting. However, many maps—most of which did not make the cut for the exhibition—limit themselves to repeating tired national and cultural stereotypes, thus running the risk of cementing these in the heads of young readers.

Praiseworthy exemplars on view in the exhibition include maps from the Polish book *Mapy* (Maps), which captivates its readers with an exuberant fill of informative and also entertaining pictorial vignettes that cannot help but stir our curiosity. Another impressive book from Poland is *Jestem miasto. Warszawa* (I Am a city. Warsaw). Its maps offer views of the Polish capital in key years of its history from its founding to the present day. The richly illustrated book pages recall the jam-packed pictures of a search-and-find book, yet they remain maps in that they name precise streets, squares, and buildings. The same can be said for the unique Japanese picture book *Shinkansen No Tabi* (On the Shinkansen Straight across Japan). The fascinating panoramas present a train ride that a boy takes straight from north to south Japan in a single day. They depict the landscapes passed through as if viewed from the great height of an airplane in the sky. Despite the great distance, innumerable, meticulously rendered and labeled particularities can be spotted in the images.

One unusual kind of map is that which artistically depicts real places as somehow foreign. Two examples of this kind of map can be found in *Tibet: Through the Red Box* and *The Wall*, both by Peter Sís. These picture books feature maps of the cities of Lhasa and Prague, respectively, which the artist has creatively enhanced by weaving in the character of each place, its symbolic meanings, and its historical events. So, for instance, the Palace of the Dalai Lama looms in the center of Lhasa, surrounded by a labyrinth of walls and alleys, perched regally and inaccessible atop a mountain. Prague is displayed, maze-like, in the year 1968, the year of the Prague Spring; Sís depicts the city as a circular labyrinth occupied by countless tiny red Soviet tanks.

One of the most amusing maps in the exhibition is a world map found in Taro Miura's picture book *Tokio*, published in Spain. In this map, the continents



and oceans form black and white spots on the patterned hide of a geographically savvy cow. The map is crafted so simply and yet so cleverly that many observers will only recognize on second glance what is hidden in plain sight on the cow.

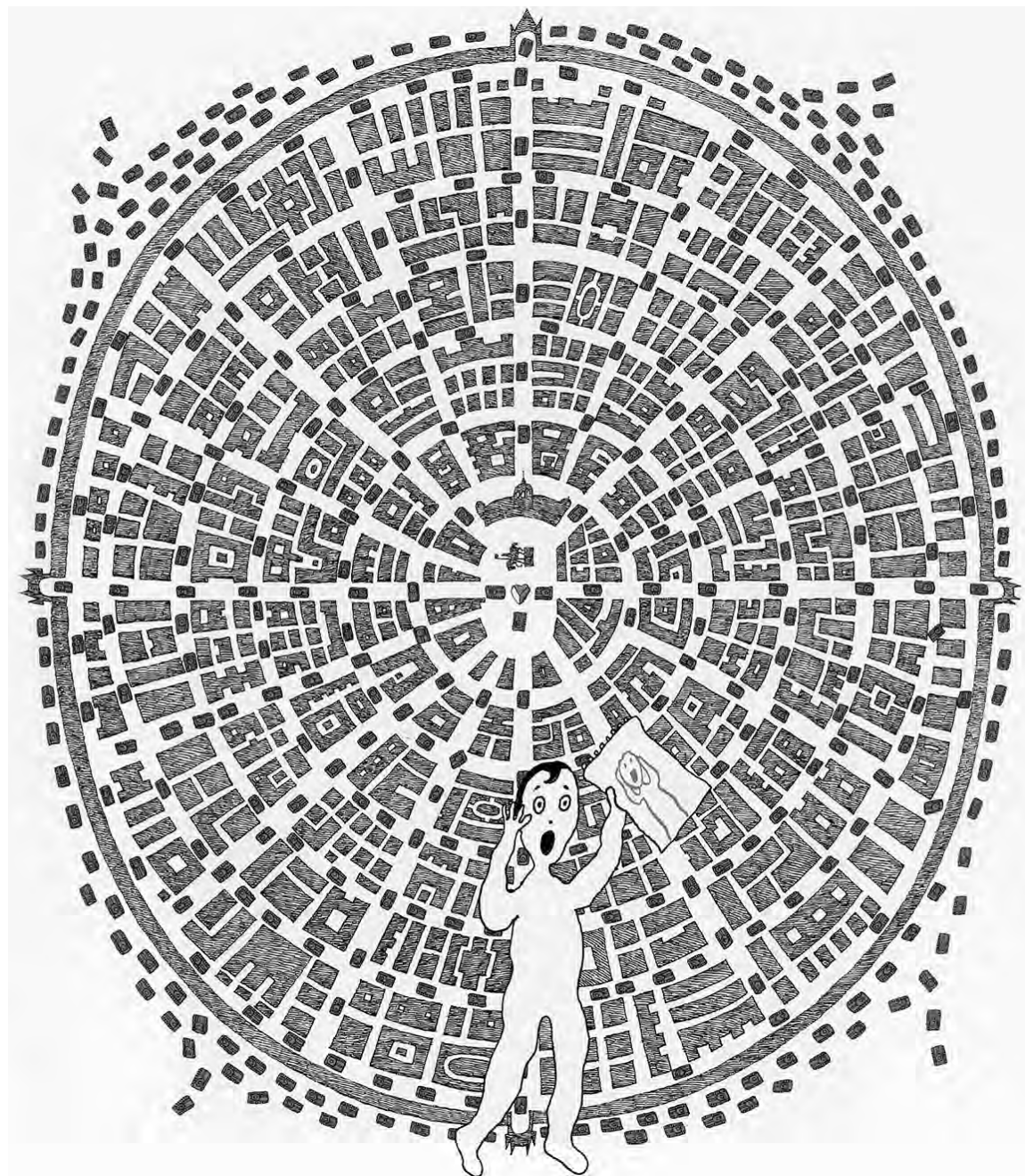
In the case of maps depicting wholly invented fantasy worlds, it is striking how many stand squarely in the tradition of J. R. R. Tolkien's maps. The finely drawn monochrome maps of Middle Earth have an unmistakable style and continue to serve as exemplars for many illustrators; one might even claim they are the prototype for fantasy-literature maps. They were certainly ground-breaking in their representation of mountains, forests, seas, and lakes as well as in their distinctive typography.

The exhibition also reveals that it is the maps of fantasy worlds, funnily enough, that are often drawn with the most attention paid to meticulous detail. As a result, they seem realistic and suggest "realness," even though their every line emerged from the minds and imaginations of their inventors and illustrators and they are but make-believe. This is the case, for example, with the island map from the novel *Méto* by French author Yves Grevet. The map carefully conveys the topography upon which the novel is staged. Hills and forests, single buildings, and even different water depths of the sea around the island are precisely rendered.

An unusual fantasy map hails from the pen of Chris Riddell. Drawing on the style of a finely etched copper engraving, the English illustrator created a breath-taking picture for Paul Stewart's *The Edge Chronicles* that dramatically depicts the sky-high backdrop against which the novel's events unfold. At first glance, it seems to be just an illustration, but since particular places on the map are named, this is another case of a map—more proof that there are countless ways to conceive and construct maps.

The maps found in François Place's three-volume encyclopedic work *Atlas des géographes d'Orbæ* are marvelous highlights of the exhibition. In the work's alphabetically organized "lexical entries," the French author and illustrator describes twenty-six legendary places, countries, and landscapes of his own in-

vention. For each chapter, he has created a miniature-like, artful map which cleverly conceals the beginning letter of each country. In these imaginative, entirely novel and uniquely constructed maps, Place draws on the style of old map-making as well as the painting of different epochs and cultures. Whether



From the Japanese picture book *The Wall*



Traditional Culture in Chinese Children's Literature after 1980

Qi Tongwei

Traditional Chinese culture became “the other” we always need talk about after modern lifestyle and thoughts gradually affected Chinese life. However, this particular “other” still has a deep appeal in our mind and life, as some of this culture can even be considered inborn. So let us browse the fictions in China after 1980 to see the influence of traditional culture.

Root-seeking Elements

In the 1980s, Root-seeking literature was an important part of Chinese literature. During the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1966–76), the educational system was destroyed, and there were no well-organized educational curriculums. Under such conditions, Western culture and traditional Chinese culture all became unfamiliar. However, after the Reform and Open Up policy, many things—for instance, customs which were forbidden during the Cultural Revolution—were allowed and encouraged. In 1978,

China sent fifty students and researchers to the USA. This is only one example of how China was enthusiastically trying to learn from other nations by the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s. Government leaders frequently visited modern societies around the world. Writers also wanted to use Western modern literature forms to renew literary language. On the other side, after being ignored for a long period, traditional culture also became a “fresh” element of narrative innovation. In 1984, the “root-seeking” movement was introduced at a literature conference in Hangzhou.

As a result, we can now find a combination of modern Western literary forms and traditional Chinese culture elements in children's fictions such as *Yu Huan* (Hallucinations about a Fish), *Lan Niao* (Bluebird), *Wo'men Meiyou Biao* (We Didn't Have a Watch), *Mishi Zai Shenxia Guzhen Zhong* (Lost in the Ancient Town at Midsummer). These works introduced readers to different narrative forms and themes. In *Yu Huan*, we enjoy the scenes of the river



form the viewpoint of a boy who took a boat back to his hometown on the headstream of Huangpu River from Shanghai. He always “neurotically” felt there was a large fish following his boat. The fish is a metaphor for countryside culture and hometown, because the boy’s family emigrated from there to Shanghai, the most modern city of China. This kind of neurotic figure can also be seen in *Lan Niao* and *Wò'men Meiyou Biao*. In *Wò'men Meiyou Biao*, author Mei Zihan removed punctuations in some paragraphs to make a tense of long debate in Cultural Revolution. In Qin

Wenjun’s *Sidi De Lü Zhuangyuan* (*The Green Plantation of My Younger Brother*), the plantation strongly attracted younger brother to move back from Shanghai. In *Wuci de Yaolanqu* (*Lullabies without Lyrics*) for E’ji (meaning grandmother in this story) and Badama (a Mongol boy) the yak is considered divine. However, in the progress of economic developments, traditional thoughts were no longer common and understandable. For instance, the family members in Shanghai could not comprehend Sidi’s obsession with the farm. The yak was eventually killed.

Fan Xilin's Wuxia Novels

In Chinese, the word *fiction*, or *novel*, is translated into the word *Xiaoshuo* (小说). However, *Xiaoshuo* is not a new word. It has a long history, and its meaning has changed over time: it went from “sayings that were not profound” to “unofficial history,” “storytelling,” “text of storytelling,” “records of legend,” “stories of fictitious figures,” and finally, “popular narrative genres” (Tan). Some of these meanings are similar to the concept of fiction or novel in Western literature while some of the earlier ones are different. In other words, Chinese *Xiaoshuo* tradition showed different expressions with western works of fictions or novels since their respective development. For this reason, since the modernizing process of the late Qing Dynasty, many researchers discussed or objected the use of “Westernized Chinese fiction” (以西例律我国小说) in their analysis. Therefore, the *Wuxia* works of Fan Xilin (novels about ancient Chinese martial arts, kung fu) can be seen as one kind of *Xiaoshuo*—as “records of legend.” In children’s literature, Fan Xilin’s *Wuxia* novels are an important example of the revival of Chinese *Xiaoshuo* tradition.

The omniscient perspective, like in the traditional *Xiaoshuo*, provide us with additional information of “preterhuman” plots. Sayings such as “walking on snow without leaving a trace,” “walking on grass like flying,” “quiet walking like the wind,” and “walking on water” (踏雪无痕草上飞、风过无声水上漂) vividly introduce to us protagonists and their environment. Through this way, the storytellers have direct dialogues with the implied audience.

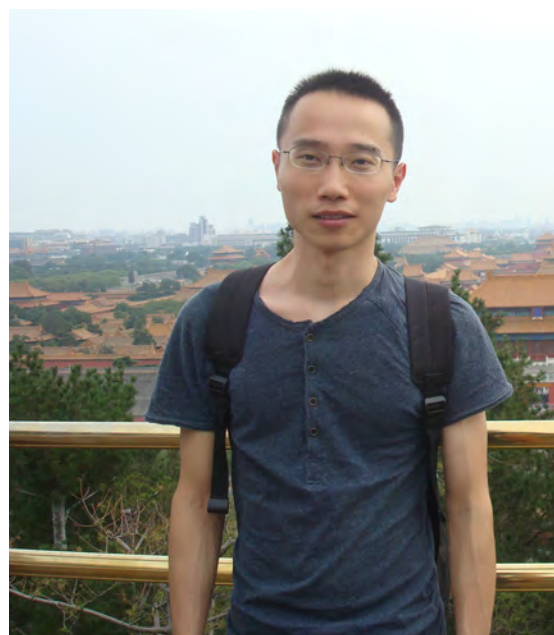
In these works, kung fu becomes a tool for unifying the plots. Characters with fantastic kung fu skills—for instance, Xiao Qianshou Shen, Tiedan Zhang, and Shen Xia—are not the same as ordinary people; these capable “nice” people often do their best to solve crimes and, eventually, catching the criminals. Through the progress of events in his novels, Fan shows the spirit of loyalty, incorruption, and so on, which is also emphasized in the traditional Chinese culture. We can also find in *Gushan Lun Zhen* (*Discussing the Needles on the Gushan Mountain*), *Zhu Jian Tang* (*Soup Made of Swords*), and *Wo You Qigong Wo Pa Shui* (*I Don’t Fear Anyone Since I Have Fantastic Kung Fu*) that kung fu masters enjoyed the interactions between themselves—meaning, they appreciated the taste of life and kung fu. In *Xi Xing Dafa* (*Supernatural Power to Adsorb Stars*), Ye Tuobei, who sold plasters in

the alley, finds a way to catch the thief. Ye also give us another kind of image of the hero.

Though the time setting and the narrative form in these *Wuxia* children’s stories are very similar to traditional *Xiaoshuo*, Fan made them sprightlier and briefer to enable his target readers (children) to more easily accept these works. Here we can see the tension in the interaction between Chinese *Xiaoshuo* tradition and children readers’ tastes. This kind of tension could also be found in the works of fiction mentioned in the first section—that is, the mixed enthusiasm to tradition and to the West.

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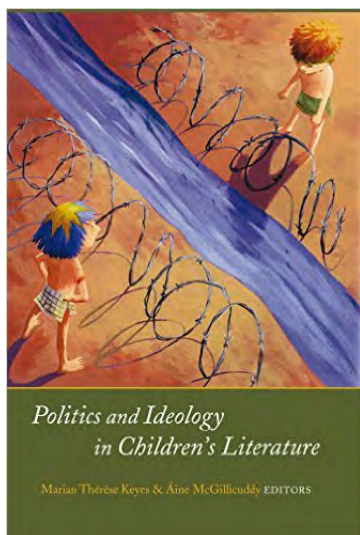
Tan, Fan. Wang, Qinhua. “Xiaoshuo Kao,” *Literature Review*, 6 (2011): 155-163.



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Books on Books

Shauna Wilton and Brandon Alakas



Politics and Ideology in Children's Literature. Ed. by Marian Thérèse Keyes and Áine McGillicuddy. Series: *Studies in Children's Literature*; 7. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014. 191 pages. ISBN: 978-1-84682-526-2.

The introduction to *Politics and Ideology in Children's Literature* begins with a quotation from Peter Hunt which states, "[C]hildren's literature and childhood do not exist outside ideology" (9). This volume achieves its goal of exploring how children's literature can advocate, subvert, or contest particular world views by examining the "implicit and explicit manifestations of ideology in children's literature" (10). The authors engage with a wide range of subject matter which incorporates a variety of types of texts and approaches in order to expose the politics and ideology embedded within them. Ranging from ecocritical, biopolitical, cinematic, feminist, and comparative approaches, each chapter builds on the scholarly work in their respective subfields producing a wide-ranging and impactful text.

The contributors to the volume come from a variety of countries—primarily Ireland, Canada, and the UK—and include established and emerging scholars, teachers, and

librarians. Together, they analyze literature from a variety of times and places such as early European myths and fables, eighteenth century Children's stories from the United States, and modern cinematic interpretations of children's stories and contemporary popular literature for youth. In this sense, the subjects range from Beatrix Potter's works to the Hunger Games, from "Bluebeard" to the Twilight series, and from times of war and resistance to idealized times of peace. While this is a broad range of topics to explore, the volume unites them through the clear focus on politics and ideology within the individual texts studied.

Politics and Ideology in Children's Literature is divided into four sections: ideology and subversion, utopias and dystopias, war and exile, and gender politics. The section on ideology and subversion explores the transformative potential of children's literature. Clémentine Beauvais' chapter examines the

scope of social and political transformation encouraged by books for children and their different views of the individual's role in the world. Eithne O'Connell's chapter on Beatrix Potter focuses on the need to investigate the role of author of children's literature in transmitting environmental messages across generations and provides a nuanced analysis of the relationship between authors, their books, and their audiences. Victoria de Rijke exposes the original political nature of children's fables and the changing politicization of the fables over time, while Olga Springer compellingly presents the subversive nature of Edward Lear's limericks.

The second section on utopias and dystopias addresses an increasingly popular trend within children's literature, reflecting the "contemporary anxieties of young people." The first two chapters in this section focus on Irish literature and the role of literature in national imaginings and reinvention. Together with the chapter on the Hunger Games by Susan Shau Ming Tan, this section explores the roles of children within children's literature as both the nation's future and as the carriers of the nation's past. In this sense, the novels studied provide a fantastical alternative to reality while potentially empowering youth as agents of change.

The section on war and exile focuses on children's literature from the first part of the twentieth century. Elizabeth Galway's study of English children's literature from WWII demonstrates the variety of ways in which children are represented within the texts, while Jessica D'Eath's chapter on fascist Italian children's literature explores the political role of texts within the context of the interwar years. Finally, Áine McGillicuddy's chapter on the life and work of Judith Kerr investigates the relationship between the author's life experience and the reading of her texts.

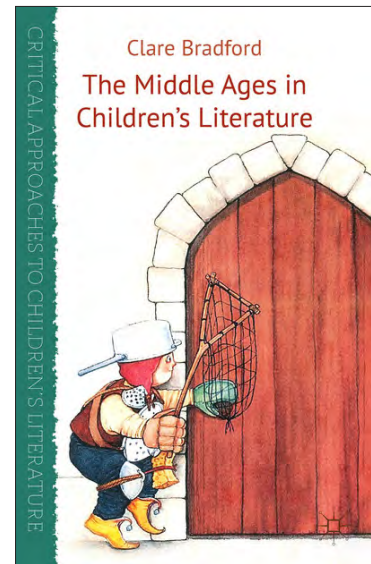
The final section focuses on gender politics across time and space. The subjects range from Marian Thérèse Keyes analysis of paratexts in the work of Anna Maria Hall and the ways in which they were used by the author to guide the reading of her work to Brigitte Le Juez's analysis of cinematic adaptation of

"Bluebeard." The final chapter in the volume, by Marion Rana, is perhaps the most powerful. Rana argues that "sexual violence is a recurrent theme in young adult fiction" and that different rape myths are employed to justify sexual violence against women. This troubling aspect of young adult literature aimed at girls restates the importance of studying these texts and encouraging critical reading among youth.

Although the introduction to the volume states that we need to recognize that children are not just "passive vessels," most of the individual chapters in the book do not address this key component as part of their analysis of the impact of texts on audiences. Some of the chapters, therefore, could better address the context within which the books are produced and, more importantly, consumed. While this criticism may go beyond the scope of the book and the study of literature into cultural studies or psychology, it seems essential to me that when we explore what messaging is within the texts, we also explore (or at least acknowledge) the process of what Stuart Hall calls the "encoding" (the cultural context within which they are produced and disseminated) and the "decoding" of texts (how widespread were the works, who read them or reads them today, and what do we know about how the readers approach the texts and interpret them?). Ultimately, this book argues both that children's literature is inherently political and that the politics of children's literature matter. I agree; however, I would suggest a fuller understanding of the context of the production and consumption of the texts is necessary in order to really understand *how* they matter.

Shauna Wilton

Associate Professor of Political Studies, University of Alberta, Augustana



The Middle Ages in Children's Literature. by Clare Bradford. Series: *Critical Approaches to Children's Literature*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. 209 pages. ISBN: 978-1-137-03538-7.

More than any other historical period, the Middle Ages captivates the imagination of young readers. Its ubiquity in literature, film, and television series confirms the untiring appeal of the medieval. Equally expansive are the diverse ways that the Middle Ages are represented and exploited in contemporary writing for young readers. Clare Bradford's ambitious study *The Middle Ages in Children's Literature* aims to parse the "uses and abuses of the medieval in... post-medieval texts which respond to and deploy medieval culture" (2). Aligning the study of medievalism—that is, the creative depiction of the Middle Ages in post-medieval periods—with that of children's literature as two disciplines which have emerged from the margins, Bradford brings together theoretical approaches and reading strategies used within these two scholarly areas to explore the way in which medievalisms for young people make use of the Middle Ages to convey and interrogate contemporary social standards.

Each of the seven chapters of

the book explores medievalist texts through a separate conceptual approach. The theoretical scope of Bradford's study is broad and so too is the body of texts she examines, which range from picture books and fantasy to animation and paranormal romances. Drawing on Alan Robinson's notion of the *present past*—"the imagining of the past shaped in relation to the present" (26)—Bradford considers how representations of the Middle Ages reflect contemporary ideologies and world views, whether consciously or not. In doing so, she argues, medievalist texts distance readers from the present but often interrogate current issues, such as gender binarism or the marginalization of ethnic minorities. In a similar vein, Bradford reflects on the medieval and temporality in order to explore the way present-day authors comprehend the past through their own understanding of the present. In both cases, she posits, the medieval is placed in the service of making sense of the world modern audiences inhabit. The real-world materiality of the Middle Ages—the architectural styles, gardens, and landscapes—is also shown to be consciously deployed in medievalist fiction as sites rich with symbolic associations that allow authors to interrogate cultural and race-based hierarchies.

In the second half of her study, Bradford shifts attention from temporal and spatial locations of narratives to the body in order to explore the numerous disabled bodies, monstrous bodies, and human-animal relationships that populate medievalist texts for young readers. Employing disability theory—specifically, the notion of textual prosthesis—Bradford reflects on the use of disability in medievalist texts as a marker of difference and exceptionality. She argues that disabled bodies are used to undermine hegemonic masculinity, as in the animated film *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010), or to reconsider cultural and religious difference, as in Elizabeth Laird's *Crusade* (2008). According to Bradford, representations of monsters in medievalist texts similarly raise questions of belonging but also offer young readers new ways of thinking about their identity.

Bradford's discussion of medievalist animals, strongly inflected by Bruno Latour's notion of actor-network theory, draws attention to the way in which these texts reject anthropocentric depictions and instead highlight animals' roles as agents who participate actively in social networks. As a coda to her study, Bradford includes a chapter that explores comic representations of the Middle Ages. Returning to the concept of the *present past*, she highlights the different ways that the Middle Ages is often used as a "comic foil" (158)—a period that embodies a set of outdated and constrictive values—to deride heroic masculinity, rigid social hierarchies, and patriarchal gender relations.

The Middle Ages in Children's Literature offers a valuable contribution to discussions of medievalist texts for young readers on account of its thorough and multifaceted consideration of a broad spectrum of work. Most importantly, this book brings together a variety of theoretical approaches to medievalist fiction that offer new avenues for reading these narratives. However, the extensive scope of this study at times results in an uneven treatment of texts, and while Bradford avoids rehearsing the well-trod ground of more familiar work by J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and J.K. Rowling, her criteria for deciding which texts her discussion includes and which it excludes are not entirely transparent. Nevertheless, this book provides a rich articulation of the multiple constructions of the Middle Ages in and their importance for young readers.

Brandonalakas

Assistant Professor, University of Alberta, Augustana Faculty

IBBY Slovenia produces a Silent Book
to promote tolerance

IBBY Netherlands and IBBY Latvia
celebrate their twenty years of
friendship in Riga

News from IBBY Moldova

Updates for the 35th IBBY World Congress
in Auckland August 2016

IBBY Peru loses its founder and
long friend

Frog Long Shanks

A Silent Picture Book from Slovenia

TOLERANCE MEANS RESPECTING and accepting the rich diversity of world cultures, forms of expression and ways of actualizing our humanity. Tolerance is harmony in diversity.

The Slovene festival of children's literature, *Reading under the Straw Hat*, that took place in May is the pinnacle of efforts throughout the school year that motivates schoolchildren to read by giving them creative events, workshops, meetings with authors, exhibitions, etc. The 2015 event is the fifth annual festival. The festival is for all, and incentives are adapted to encourage all age ranges and abilities, including vulnerable young people, to discover the joy of reading. The development of intergenerational and intercultural cooperation is a way to emphasize tolerance and coexistence.

This year, one of the central events was the publication of a picture book without words, drawn by the schoolchildren of Primary School OŠ Venclja Perka in Domžale. The story is about a frog with such long legs or shanks that everybody makes fun of it. But when the rest of the frogs are unable to cross a deep chasm along their way, it is Frog Long Shanks that saves the day by solving the problem. The story and the illustrations are made by the

children of the class 7B of OŠ Venclja Perka with the help of Vanja Repič, their art education teacher. The author is Gal Pirš and the conceptual author of the illustration is Rok Mlinar Vahtar; Edvina Dedič, Jan Bašič, Gal Pirš, and Rok Gošnik made the pictures.

The purpose of this silent picture book is to promote tolerance. The Slovenian section of IBBY initiated the project with the financial support of the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO. The preparation of the book was organized and then published by Miš Publishing.

The Slovenian section of IBBY will donate copies of the book to the Italian section of IBBY for the children's library on the island of Lampedusa, where thousands of immigrants arrive every year, including many children. The picture book will also be distributed for free to the immigrant children in Slovenian schools.

This new picture book will tell children—all children from different environments—to be proud of who they are.

Tilka Jamnik
IBBY Slovenia



IBBY Latvia and IBBY The Netherlands Bund-of-Friendship for Twenty Years

THE FIRST TIME WE SPOKE to Silvija Tretjakova, the enthusiastic and inspiring head of the Children's Book Center in Riga, was in Groningen at the 25th IBBY Congress in 1996. A year later, I travelled to Riga with the president of the Dutch IBBY section, Jant van der Weg-Laverman, to discuss the plans about the center with one of the directors of the National Library; that was the start of a long bund-of-friendship between our two IBBY sections.

Less than two years later in 1998, with financial support of the Dutch IBBY section, Silvija Tretjakova opened the center in its own building. Since then, we have organized many successful joint projects. In 2015, the Dutch IBBY section supported the Parent Jury project with 5,000 euro; we had also financially supported the project earlier. It is well known that in most reading-promotion activities, it is always the mothers who participate, but we know that it is also very important to show fathers reading aloud and reading for their own enjoyment. Children need to see that their fathers also read for pleasure. The support of Dutch IBBY enabled the Children's Book Center to encourage fathers to enjoy the project and show that reading is for everyone.

The aim of the Parent Jury project is to strengthen the connections between children and adults by spending some time talking about books with them. There are four age categories in the children's jury: 5+, 9+, 11+, and 15+. In all these categories, there is a pre-selection of six titles made by specialists (originally Latvian, but also translated books are selected). Next to these categories, there is a category for adults. In this category, there is a pre-selection of four books, and the other two books, the parents have to select from the other categories according to the age of their children.

Years ago when some of the members of the

Dutch IBBY-section were in Riga, we spoke about the children's jury in the way it is organized in the Netherlands. Silvija and her staff were impressed by this way of promoting children's books. When Silvija visited the Netherlands, we could show more about this national reading promotion activity. For almost fifteen years, the Children's Book Center has organized the Children's Jury in Latvia; in the last four years, parents have also been involved in the project. The year 2015 had the highest number of participants since the start of the project! This year, about 18,000 readers voted for their favorite books, and because they had to justify their vote, all the books were discussed. School librarians and many parents also took part in the project. In the 2012 project, more than 1,300 parents voted, but only 15 of them were fathers. In 2013, more than 1,400 parents were involved in the project and 70 of them were fathers. In 2014, the number of parents taking part rose to 1,700, and twice as many fathers took part than in the previous year. These adults were motivated to participate in common reading adventures and developed the long-term intention of promoting reading traditions in the family.

To promote the Parent Jury program, the most enthusiastic adult participants—one in each region—were chosen. Five mothers became special Reading Ambassadors whose main task was to popularize the Parent Jury and inspire other readers to get involved in reading together with children and discussing the books they have read. They received bags printed with the logo that were filled with books donated by different publishing houses: Zvaigzne ABC, Liels un Mazs, Alis, Jumava, Pāergailis, Dienas Gramta, Mansards, Omnia Mea, and Jā Rozes apgāds.

It was not easy to reach the fathers, and it took many years. However, every father who has been reached by the project is a success. They were also motivated; for example, fathers could win a sub-





Visit to Lottemaa Park, Estonia

scription to a magazine (such as *National Geographic Latvia*). The Children's Jury project in Latvia has developed into an interesting project, more than in the Netherlands. In Latvia, everyone has to justify their vote, and that is something children do not have to do in the Netherlands. Librarians get the books for the jury (those that are not already in their collections), and they organize meetings with parents to introduce the books. Schools also organize activities to support the project. This exciting project is only possible thanks to the support of the Ministry of Culture and the Cultural Kapital Foundation.

To celebrate the success of the 2015 Parent Jury project, I joined a wonderful trip to Estonia through Latvia in July with the winners of the project, parents, children, and librarians. Some of the staff members of the Children's Book Center, who had expertly organized the project, also went on the trip. On Saturday, we went by bus to Cesis in Latvia, where we first had dinner and the possibility to talk informally with each other about

the experiences in the project. During the bus trip, everyone showed their most beloved book and promoted it by telling why everyone should read this book. They also read aloud passages from the book. After dinner, we went to visit the science center *Z(in)oo* and had a very interesting excursion to the Public Library. Then we traveled on to Valga on the Estonian border, where we stayed for the night. The next morning, we had an excursion to a secondary school, and after a beautiful trip through the forest, we went to Lottemaa Theme Park. In Lotte Village, located in a beautiful coastal forest, you can find Gadgetville—the magical place known from Lotte films, musicals, and books by Janno Põldma. During the bus ride back to Riga, once again books were presented. It was a great weekend. And we were already talking about plans for the future. I am looking forward to the 25th celebration of the bund-of-friendship between our IBBY-sections.

Toin Duijx
IBBY Netherlands

News from IBBY Moldova

CHIȘINĂU (pronounced Kish-i-now) is a mixture of old and new. It still has the monoliths of the Soviet era standing on the hillsides and along the main boulevard and used as government offices. But it also has the low-rise traditional houses. The municipal parks are full of people—courting couples, families, groups of friends of all ages—and bright red tulips are blooming everywhere. The great literary talents stand along the paths, even with a cast-iron pergola standing next to the statue of Mihai Eminescu for young lovers to declare themselves. It is within this literary tradition that the Moldovan International Children's Book Fair takes place every spring. The 19th fair took place 23-26 April 2015 at the Moldexpo International Exhibition Center in Chișinău. The IBBY section of Moldova is the main organizer of the fair, and their partners include the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sport, the National Library

“Ion Creanga,” the Union of Publisher, the UNESCO National Commission, and many more. It is truly a national event.

The program included many exhibitors from Moldova as well as from Romania, Turkey, India, China, and Russia. Spiridon Vangheli, the 2014 Laureate of the Book of The Year, had written a special book that was presented to every child who visited the fair. All the schools arranged for their children to visit the fair, not only from Chișinău but also from across the country. It was great to see all the children clutching their copies of *Comoara* (Treasure) as they left the building.

The opening speeches included a greeting by IBBY President, Wally de Doncker, which was given by Liz Page on his behalf. The message began, “I would like to start by thanking everyone engaged in IBBY Moldova. You are making a difference for future generations.” And closed with the words,

Reading is a fundamental right for all children. To liberate, to be able to read and write, is to possess a kind of power. Literacy is also a defence against demagoguery and extremism. It is the job of “our” IBBY to make sure that every child can obtain this “power.”

A part of the program was a symposium for teachers that took place at the Chișinău Education, Youth, and Sport Department. The symposium was organized by the IBBY Section of Moldova and began with a presentation given by Liz Page about the work of IBBY worldwide as a promoter of peace and understanding through children's books. This was followed by a presentation by Kestutis Urba, President of IBBY Lithuania, who spoke about the translation of literature for children and young people in Lithuania and the trends within the genre. The whole day was full of presentations by speakers from Moldova and Romania.

There were many activities throughout the fair, with thousands of children taking part—the few busy days culminating in a festive presentation of prizes given to publishers, authors, illustrators and children.



Moldovan IBBY President Claudia Balaban at the opening.



Another major activity of IBBY Moldova is the renovation of the National Children's Library in Chișinău—the "Ion Creanga" library. The work is ongoing, but already, you can see that the library will be a bright and welcoming place for children and young people. The President of the section Claudia Balaban is dynamic and determined to bring the best to the children on Moldova. And she will succeed!

Liz Page, IBBY



**Above: One of the many children's event during the fair.
Right: Claudia Balaban and Eugenia Bejan at the National Children's Library "Ion Creanga".**

IBBY World Congress, 18-21 August 2016 in Auckland

IN JUST A FEW MONTHS, IBBY members from all over the world will be making their way to New Zealand to take part in the 35th IBBY World Congress. Early Bird registration opened on 1 September 2015 and will close on 31 March 2016, giving you plenty of time to take advantage of the lower registration fees.

The program is taking shape, and with such speakers as Bronwyn Bancroft, Ursula Dubosarsky, Nadia Wheatley, and Macus Zusak from Australia; Roger Mello from Brazil; Meshack Asare from Ghana; Martin Baynton, Joy Cowley, Kate De Goldi, Witi Ihimaera, and Richard Taylor from New Zealand; Julia Eccleshare from the UK; and, Leonard Marcus from the USA, you can expect a dynamic mix of

interesting, thought-provoking, and exciting speakers. In addition, there will be presentations from around the world in parallel and poster sessions.

As a special treat, the organizers have planned for the annual national Storylines Festival to coincide with the Congress, and you will be offered the chance to experience this festival for yourselves! Further, the World Finals of the Kids' Lit Quiz™ will be held during the Congress, a rare opportunity to see teams of children from around the world compete to become the best readers in the world and win the World Cup.

Keep visiting the Congress website for up-to-date news:

WWW.IBBYCONGRESS2016.ORG





Lilly C. de Cueto, January 1926 – July 2015

Humanist, teacher, advocate, benefactor of Peruvian
Education and Children's Literature. Founder of IBBY Peru.

*The eyes of a child are eager to see, learn all that is
at their reach and they can be taught to read from early
childhood.*

Dear Lilly

Throughout your life in CEDILI/IBBY Peru, you never ceased to amaze us with your intelligence, vigor, clarity, and strength to assume the most difficult tasks and challenges presented. With your tenderness, warmth, sense of humor, creativity, and vitality, you have enriched our meetings and encouraged the development and implementation of our projects. Your social awareness and willingness to help the disadvantaged took us to the farthest corners of our country in an effort to bring them comfort and assistance.

Your tireless work promoting in the love of

reading, founding libraries, and bringing books to children, parents, teachers, and librarians was always your priority. You believed that these efforts were seeds, which would benefit education and children's well-being.

In CEDILI/IBBY Peru, we feel the deepest gratitude towards you for your love, guidance, and teachings and the privilege to have shared this noble work with you.

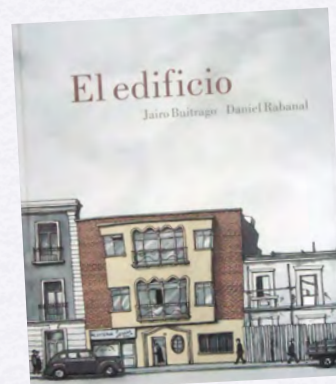
It will not be easy to fill the void you have left. However, we cherish your legacy and will continue your work with passion, inspiration, and humility to carry on in profound silence with the certainty that you will always be close, very close to our hearts.

Ingrid De Andrea de Talleri
IBBY Peru/CEDILI

The Building tells the story of Mr. Levin, a clockmaker who arrives in Bogotá, Colombia, in the late 1930s and buys a little shop in the first floor of a small building. There he works and lives for the next 50 years, as the neighborhood and the city change around him. When a young boy moves to the second floor of the building and finds a family of mice in the storage room below the stairs, it will give Mr. Levin the opportunity to not only teach the kid a valuable lesson about caring and living with other people, but also make a new friend in the process.

While the story sounds very simple, the real protagonist of the book is the city itself. Rabanal's detailed illustrations, reminiscent of Hergé's *The Adventures of Tintin*, give the reader a panoramic view of the city and its inhabitants, from the cars on the street to the building itself. The use of grays and sepias at the beginning, and soft colors once the boy and his family arrive, give the book a nostalgic look that complements perfectly Buitrago's sparse and often poetic text, creating a fascinating visual and literary experience.

Andrés Montañés-Lleras



**El edificio
(The Building)
Jairo Buitrago**

Illustrated by
Daniel Rabanal
Bogotá: Babel Libros,
2014. 52 pp.
ISBN: 978-958-8841-67-0
Picture book; ages 8+

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Young Anna lives in the Jamaican countryside where families have to carry water from the springs daily. Anna is excited to accompany her brothers and sisters as they complete this task each day; however, unlike her siblings, she cannot yet carry her water container on her head. Amid her fear of being chased by the neighbor's cows as the family walks back and forth through the fields each day, and her determination to be just like her siblings, Anna perseveres. She soon learns to balance her water container on her head without spilling water, and realizes she does not need to be fearful of the cows. Laura James artistically highlights the beautiful Jamaican countryside with vibrant colors indicative of the Caribbean. National pride is enhanced with integration of the country's flag and national bird, the Doctor Bird (swallowtail hummingbird). The striking illustrations will enthrall young readers. Overall, this picture book evokes a nostalgic reminiscing of Jamaica.

Ruth McKoy Lowery



**Anna Carries Water
Olive Senior**

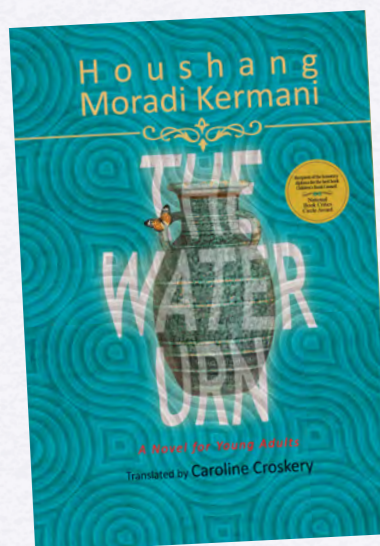
Illustrated by
Laura James
Vancouver, Canada:
Tradewind Books, 2013
(published in the USA
2014). Unp.
ISBN: 9781896580609
Picture book; ages 4-7

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

The Water Urn is a novel for children and young adults set in a quintessential Iranian village of fifty years ago. In the schoolhouse of this village, the water urn is an indispensable fixture; it provides drinking water, and water gives refreshment and life. When the urn gets cracked, Mr. Samadi, the schoolmaster, must go through endless trials and tribulations in order to arrange for its repair. A schoolboy named Ghanbari takes pride in his father's ability to fix water urns, and the dynamic of a father and son relationship gets woven into the predicament. Each situation regarding the repair of the water urn gives rise to new escapades involving handicrafts, egg yolks, lime, and ash. Little Mohammad Ali has a near-drowning experience when Mr. Samadi takes the children down to the stream on their daily excursions to get a drink of water. Furious and determined to rectify this situation once and for all, little Mohammad Ali's mother, Khaavar, finally takes charge, fervently calling upon all the village members to make donations for the purchase of a new water urn. The seasons change as Khaavar's older son, Abbas, travels to the city to buy a new water urn while gossip abounds in his absence about the fate of the donated funds. Troubles do not seem to end soon, as successive chapters reveal new hope for solutions which prove to be as broken as the water urn. Mr. Samadi is weary. Emotions and hard feelings soar as the village people come together in the end and work to keep their devoted and beloved schoolmaster from giving up and leaving them. Will the predicament of the water urn be resolved? Young readers are given the opportunity to observe what is truly important in life through the minutiae of daily problem solving.

Sahar Tarhandeh

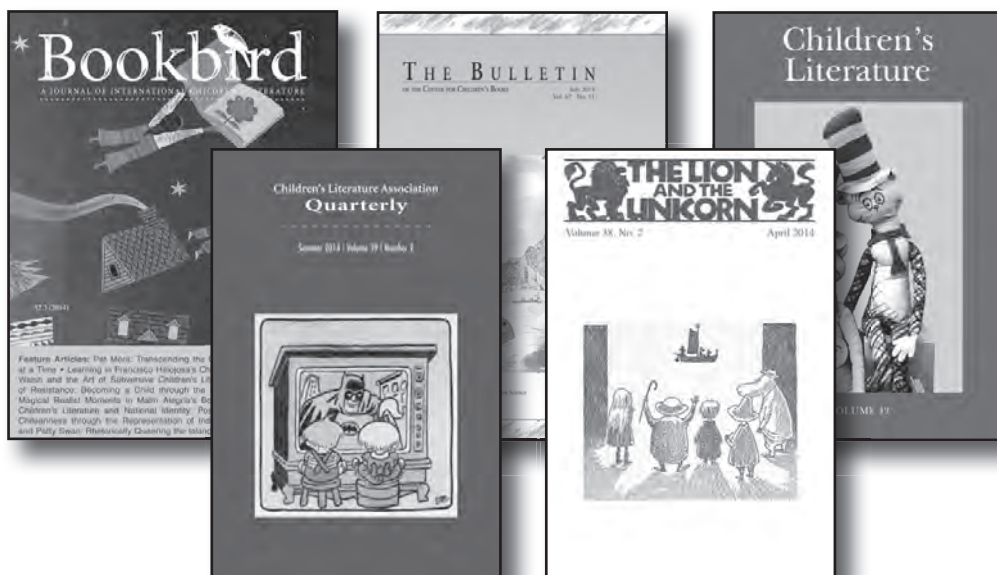
BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS



The Water Urn
Houshang Moradi Kermani
 Translated by
 Caroline Crockery
 Illustrated by
 Negin Ehtesabian
 London: Candle & Fog
 Publishing Company, Ltd.,
 2014. 195 pages.
 ISBN: 978-964-2667-89-5
www.candle-fog.com



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BOOKBIRD

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