

Bookbird

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



2015, VOL. 53, NO.2

INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG

IBBY

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A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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

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Production: Design and layout by Mats Hedman, Sweden.

Printed by The Sheridan Press, Hanover, Pennsylvania, USA

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

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

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

Subscriptions to Bookbird: See last page.

IBBY Executive Committee 2014-2016: Wally de Doncker (Belgium) President; Akoss Ofori-Mensah (Ghana), Vice President; Azucena Galindo Ortega (Mexico) Vice President; Evelyn B. Freeman (USA), Ferelith Hordon (UK), Sunjidmaa Jamba (Mongolia), Angela Lebedeva (Russia), Vagn Plenge (Denmark), Serpil Ural (Turkey), Timotea Vrablova (Slovakia), Mingzhou Zhang (China), Voting Members; Patricia Aldana (Canada) Hans Christian Andersen Jury President; Elizabeth Page (Switzerland) Executive Director; Ellis Vance (USA) Treasurer; Björn Sundmark (Sweden) *Bookbird* Editor

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

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Editorial

As I write these words, the morning mists are just rising. It is chilly outside. But it is light, and the birds are singing encouragingly. Yes, spring is in the air—even if just barely—here in the north. And in a few days, I will go to the Bologna Book Fair. I am sure it will be “fair” in many senses of the word, not just the mercantile, and no doubt warmer than here. But it is not just the prospect of Italian spring that makes me expectant. It will be the first big occasion to meet friends and correspondents from all over the world after the publication of my first *Bookbird* as editor (53.1), and I am of course eager to know how it has been received. I also wish to spread the news about the journal to as many as possible at the Book Fair. I wish, moreover, for many fortuitous meetings and inspired moments in Bologna, all of which I can bring with me to the making of future *Bookbirds*.

Soon, soon I will walk the meadows with the expectant dog, but not just yet.

While thinking of Bologna and that first issue, the second issue—the one you are now holding in your hand—is in the final stages of preparation. In it you will find a new feature: “Authors and Illustrators and Their Books.” This is a logical step. *Bookbird* has for a long time provided various perspectives on children’s books. Children’s reception of books is in focus in the section “Children & Their Books.” And scholars, critics, librarians, and our mother organization (IBBY) as well as other interested parties contribute in sections such as “Letters,” “Postcards,” “Articles,” “Books on Books,” and “Focus IBBY.” And I do the editorial... Yet, those who make all of this possible with their creativity, the authors and illustrators, have not had a direct forum in *Bookbird* till now.

“Authors & Illustrators & Their Books” could either contain original texts by authors and illustrators or consist of interviews. For this issue, the Swedish author Monica Zak shares her experience with *The Boy who Lived with Ostriches*, an adventure that takes her to the refugee camps in Western Sahara. *The Boy who Lived with Ostriches*, as she tells it, turns out to be a true “bookbird.” Culturally and linguistically, it flits and flies between languages and nations. It is a story that the author picks up in Africa, writes about in Swedish, remakes in a third language (Arabic), and then takes back to its source. There it acquires new meaning in the building and affirmation of identity and culture.

It is a good story too.

Other authors that will feature in coming issues of *Bookbird* are Beverley Naidoo, JonArno Lawson, David Almond, and Cornelia Funke. The author bias is quite coincidental. But hopefully I will meet some illustrators to interview when in Bologna! In any case, I think this feature will become an important and unique part of *Bookbird*. Few, if any, academic journals of children’s literature run interviews or original texts by authors and illustrators. I believe that these texts will inspire in the moment but also be seen as a resource for a long time for anyone interested in the views and insights of some of the world’s most gifted creators of children’s books.

There is a connection between Zak’s text and Hala Bizri’s letter “The Children’s Literature of the Arab Countries,” and that is that both of these texts deal with the central, but also complex, role that Arabic plays in many countries when it comes to children’s books.

The articles featured in this open issue span a great many topics, approaches, genres, and locations. Geographically, two of the articles concern children's literature of the West Indies—Maria Acevedo's "The Portrayal of Puerto Ricans in Children's Literature" and Paige Gray's "A Different Sunshine': Writing Jamaican National Identity through a Girl's Coming-of-Age Story in Paulette Ramsay's *Aunt Jen*." There are also two articles with Australian settings—Elizabeth Braithwaite's "The Perfect Place to Set a Novel about the End of the World? Trends in Australian Post-Nuclear Fiction for Young Adults" and Colin Haines's "Challenging Stereotypes: Randa Abdel-Fattah's Use of Parody in *Does My Head Look Big in This?*" A New Zealand perspective is provided by Penni Cotton and Nicola Daly's "Cross-Continental Readings of Visual Narratives: An Analysis of Six Books in the New Zealand Picture Book Collection," while Sandra Stadler offers a statistical assessment of "Representation in South African Youth Literature." Two of the articles focus specifically on the picture book, including Karin Murriss's analysis of Anthony Browne's *Little Beauty*. (Gorilla, from that book, can be seen swinging through a room on the cover of this *Bookbird*.)

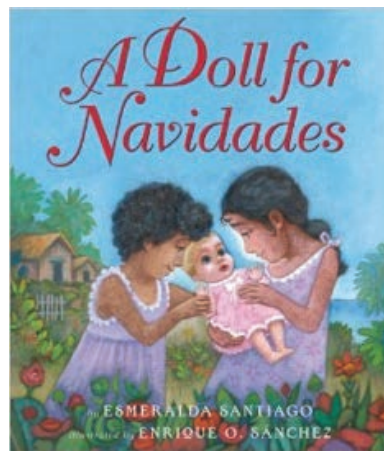
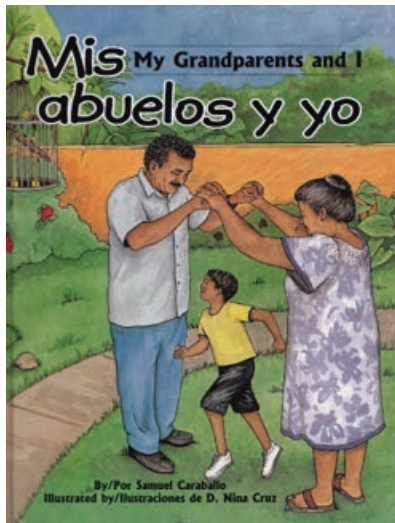
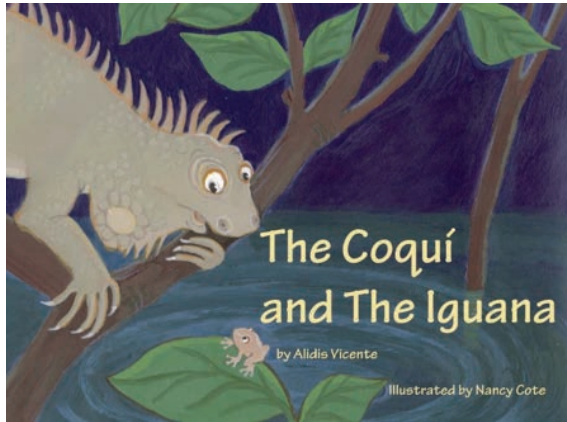
Representation and identity are key themes in many of the articles, as we can see just by reading the titles. Stadler's study of South African children's literature in English (mentioned above) is no exception, but it is especially noteworthy since her use of quantitative methods and statistics is something that is not so common in our field.

There are of course many other things to say about the contents of this issue. There are, for instance, wonderful Postcards here and there, waiting to be found and read. But now it is high time to walk out and listen to other birds as they sing about spring.

I know someone who will like that.



BJÖRN SUNDMARK is Professor of English Literature in the Faculty of Education, Malmö University, Sweden. He has published numerous articles on children's literature, and is the author of the study *Alice in the Oral-Literary Continuum* (1999) and co-editor of *The Nation in Children's Literature* (Routledge 2013). He is editor of *Bookbird—Journal of International Children's Literature*.



The Portrayal of Puerto Ricans in Children's Literature

María V. Acevedo

Research has focused on patterns and themes under the umbrella term Latino children's literature. However, the amount of books portraying Puerto Rican characters, settings, and stories is limited, creating a gap in understanding the representations of Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican-Latino/as in children's literature. This study explores the voice of Puerto Ricans through a critical content analysis of fifteen picture books published from 2000 to 2013. The first finding reveals images of rural Puerto Rico present in approximately half of the books and balanced with urban images in the remaining titles. The second finding explores how the stories contribute to resisting colonial discourses as they challenge persistent myths affecting the broad Latino population. These texts illustrate the complexity of being Puerto Rican and Latino/a, as well as explore colonial discourses and resistance within the literature.

I was born and raised in Puerto Rico. During my first visit to the United States, a hotel vendor in Boston asked me about the presence of "Indians" on the island. I felt thrown back into centuries of history and was concerned about outdated representations. As a Latina educator currently living in the Southwest, I am interested in the representations of Puerto Ricans and Latinos/as in children's literature. Given the history of Puerto Rico across four centuries of Spanish colonization and more than a century as a U.S. territory, literature can play a critical role in supporting or resisting colonial discourses. Out of my deepest respect for the authors and illustrators of the books included in this study, this research analyzes, through a postcolonial lens, how Puerto Ricans on the island and on the mainland are represented in children's books published in the United States.

Research on Puerto Rican Literature

Sonia Nieto and Lucille Gregory argue that the voices of Puerto Ricans in children's literature in the United States, although present, are rarely researched. Content analysis research has focused on an analysis of Latino children's literature as a whole, finding that this body of literature serves as a political act, as a significant influence on Latino/a identity, and as a vehicle for addressing sociopolitical issues related to different kinds of border crossings, "literatura fronteriza." Latino children's literature is viewed as addressing cross-generational perspectives on Latino/a identity, gender identities and tensions, schooling experiences, complex understandings of home, the role of language(s) in the construction of identity, and diverse cultural models that shape and are shaped by Latino communities (Medina and Martínez-Roldán; Medina; Nilsson; Medina

and Enciso). Since the number of books portraying Puerto Rican characters, settings, and stories is limited, a gap exists in examining the representation of these communities.

Nieto's survey of Puerto Ricans in children's books reveals three period-based subgroups: Books from 1940 to 1972 were primarily written by non-Puerto Ricans and were saturated by "racism, sexism, ethnocentric colonialism," and misconceptions regarding the use of Spanish. Titles from 1973 to 1983 focused on the process of assimilation and a sense of inferiority. The most recent period, from 1983 to 1994, consists of forty-five stories written for ages ranging from preschoolers to young adolescents. In the past, the intended audience had been primarily older readers, in part because of the complexity of the topics presented, such as gangs and ghettos (Gregory). This survey highlights both the absence of Puerto Ricans in children's literature and the stereotypical depictions of families. However, this third subgroup of stories does contain more authentic and in depth Puerto Rican representations. Nieto attributes the decrease of misrepresentations to the authors' and illustrators' real-life experiences and knowledge of Puerto Rican communities. Regrettably, there has been no other research focusing on analyzing a large body of Puerto Rican children's literature. For this reason, Nieto's article, although outdated, is frequently cited.

Historical Context and Postcolonial Theory

Puerto Rico is one of the five Greater Antilles located in the Caribbean Sea. Originally inhabited by the indigenous Taínos, Christopher Columbus arrived in Puerto Rico in 1493, initiating the Spanish colonization process. The four centuries of Spanish colonization were also influenced by African cultures brought to the island through slavery. The colonization process resulted in the emergence of the Puerto Ricans, popularly described as a mix of Spaniards, Africans and Taínos. In 1889, Puerto Rico was annexed by the United States as a consequence of the Spanish-American War. Since then, Puerto Rico has been a U.S. territory, experiencing a colonial relationship. In 1917, Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens through the Jones-Shafroth Act. According to the United States Census Bureau, citizenship, relative proximity, and sociopolitical and economical struggles have resulted in three diaspora movements with

3.7 million Puerto Ricans living on the island and 4.8 million living on the U.S. mainland. Gregory's discussion about Puerto Rican's "double identity," referring to those living on the island and on the mainland, and Nieto's findings regarding Puerto Ricans' wide range of experiences about their place of residence and length of time in the United States speak to this colonial relationship.

Children's books about Puerto Ricans can be described as postcolonial literature because, as Lois Tyson suggests, the vast majority of the authors are members of the Latino-Puerto Rican community, which shares experiences of colonization similar to formerly colonized populations. Sara Mills' description regarding the monolithic view of Latinos and other minorities in the United States as an "undifferentiated mass about whom one could amass 'knowledge' or which could be stereotyped" (97) is an example of those shared experiences. Given Puerto Rico's current colonial status, a postcolonial lens can serve as a tool to identify binaries, beliefs of superiority common in colonialist ideology, and non-violent anti-colonialist resistance actions. Critical theory can also lead to a better understanding of the examples of cultural imperialism present in children's literature.

Philip Nel and Lissa Paul argue that contemporary production of postcolonial children's literature includes a large number of stories told from the perspective of indigenous authors and illustrators, whose work serves as counter-narratives. The works by Latino-Puerto Rican authors selected for this study cover a wide range of experiences that can help readers explore the implications of colonial discourse and the manifestations of psychological resistance essential for other means of resistance to take place.

Selecting Puerto Rican Stories

Fifteen books were selected for analysis based on interviews with children's literature specialists on their recommendations of books with representations of Puerto Rican characters, settings, practices, and themes. The initial set was narrowed further by focusing on books published from 2000 to 2013 that are bilingual or English contemporary realistic fiction picture books with strong references to Puerto Rican cultural practices in their written text or illustrations. Books that reflected a generic Latino experience, even when written by authors who consider themselves as Puerto Ricans, were not analyzed given the

existing broad research around Latinos children's literature. I analyzed the books using critical content analysis, defined by Richard Beach et al. as a qualitative research method for text analysis using critical theory to examine relationships of power in the so-

cial practices represented in the texts. My findings emerged from multiple transactions and constant comparison of the texts. Concepts from postcolonial theory and categories developed by Nieto guided the analysis and discussion of the findings.

STORIES SET BETWEEN PUERTO RICO AND THE UNITED STATES

Title	Author / Illustrator	Publisher / Year	Summary
<i>Estrellita se despide de su isla/Estrellita Says Good-Bye to Her Island</i>	Samuel Caraballo and Pablo Torrecilla	Piñata Books, 2002	Estrellita is moving to the United States with her father. She describes the aspects of her island that she will miss.
<i>Elena's Big Move</i>	Sarah Olivieri	Synergy Books, 2009	Elena and her family are moving to Indiana and use photography as a way to remember, collect, and share stories.

STORIES SET BETWEEN PUERTO RICO

Title	Author / Illustrator	Publisher / Year	Summary
<i>Mis abuelos y yo/My Grandparents and I</i>	Samuel Caraballo and Nina Cruz	Piñata Books, 2004	A child spends the day with his grandparents visiting areas of Puerto Rico, including San Juan, the capital.
<i>Mimí's Parranda/La parranda de Mimí</i>	Lydia M. Gil and Hernan Sosa	Piñata Books, 2007	Mimí will not be able to visit Puerto Rico for Christmas. Her classmates and family organize a parranda to help Mimí cope with her longing for home.
<i>No Dogs Allowed!</i>	Sonia Manzano and John Muth	Atheneum, 2007	Families come together to spend a day at a lake while sharing multiple cultural practices and values.
<i>The Poet Upstairs</i>	Judith Ortíz-Cofer and Oscar Ortiz	Piñata Books, 2012	A girl meets a poet who shows her how to use poetry to remember the island of Puerto Rico.
<i>Baseball on Mars/ Béisbol en Marte</i>	Rafael Rivera Jr. and Christina Rodríguez	Arte Público, 2009	A father and son play together in their house playground.
<i>Grandma's Records</i>	Eric Velásquez	Lectorum, 2004	A boy spends time with his grandmother and is introduced to Puerto Rican salsa singers.
<i>Grandma's Gift. (2nd Ed)</i>	Eric Velásquez	Lectorum, 2013	A boy learns about Puerto Rican Christmas traditions through his grandmother.
<i>The Day the Animals Came.</i>	Frances Weller and Loren Long	Philomel, 200	A girl develops a sense of belonging after attending a St. Francis animal parade in New York.

Two findings from the analysis are discussed in this article. First, images of rural Puerto Rico dominate forty percent of the literature, while the remaining titles provide a balanced representation of urban and rural images. Second, the authors challenge persistent myths about Latino-Puerto Ricans families through their stories, positioning families as hard-working, caring, and supportive of their children's education.

Images of Rural Puerto Rico

A physical description of the island depicts Puerto Rico as a green, colorful, tropical, exotic, and rural place in forty percent of the books. This rural paradise is sometimes created by authors writing from their childhood memories or about historical characters. *A Doll for Navidades* is a memory around Christmas in a rural community from Santiago's childhood. In *The Poet Upstairs*, Ortíz-Cofer describes "a river that leads to a sea," parrots, hibiscus, and a big yellow sun through a poem that invokes the life of Puerto Rican poet Julia de Burgos during the 1950's in New York. In *The Coquí and the Iguana*, Vicente shares stories about bioluminescent waters in Puerto Rico as she remembers from childhood visits to the island. In *Estrellita se despide de su isla/Estrellita Says Good-bye to Her Island*, Caraballo describes the beach, the dairy farm, el jíbaro (the farmer), and green hills as Estrellita treasures her memories before moving to the United States. Estrellita's experiences in New York are described in *Estrellita in the Big City*. The story compares grandmother Panchita's house in Puerto Rico to the Big City. The illustrations describe buildings versus the beach, a cordless-phone or cellphone versus a cord-phone, and a hectic, crowded city versus the peaceful, lonely life by the ocean.

Although there are green landscapes on the island, these books do not represent the range of urban and rural settings and lifestyles that exist in Puerto Rico. If not paired with contemporary representations of the island, these books depict an outdated and simplistic perspective of Puerto Rico which Clare Bradford argues is a manifestation of post-colonial discourse ("The End of Empire?"). As in the Australian children's books reviewed by Bradford ("Exporting Australia"), Puerto Rican picture books refer to the island's landscape as removed from the cities and towns where most Puerto Ricans actually live. Some of the ideological values that emerge

from this rural vision are honesty and hard work; the valorizing of a simple life; and the portrayal of Puerto Ricans as innocent, trusting, and lazy, along with a portrayal of natural environments versus the dangers of urban city life. Themes within outdated stories tend to be safe, simple, and uncomplicated (Bradford, "Exporting Australia"). Vivian Yenika-Agbaw claims that a dominant image of nature and romance within a primarily rural setting serves as an example of postcolonial literature by portraying characters as insufficient, simple, and dependent.

The selected set of books, however, also presents a counter-narrative to Chimamanda Adichie's concept of a single story around Puerto Rico's landscape, creating a more balanced representation. In *Mis Abuelos y yo (My grandparents and I)*, Caraballo incorporates a variety of settings beyond the beach and El Morro (national historic site), as the characters take pictures of cruise-liners and are amazed by vehicles being carried on big freighters. Also adding to contemporary representations, *Sergio and the Hurricane*, set in San Juan, describes supermarkets, cars, houses with garages, and cement seawalls. Similarly, in *Elena's Big Move*, the characters utilize a digital camera to take pictures of places they want to remember from Puerto Rico: the beach, which is located in front of multiple high-rise city buildings; a church; their doctor's office; the Camuy Caves; and the airport.

Challenging Assumptions about Latino Families

These texts resist colonial discourse by challenging two persistent myths about Latino families: The first myth describes Latino parents as not valuing education. The second myth considers Latinos to be lazy.

Latino parents do not value education

Richard Valencia and Mary Black argue that deficient views of Latino families sustain the belief that Latino parents do not value education. However, the books in this study challenge that belief by describing learning experiences inside and outside of school that align with the concept of *educación*. Leslie Reese, Silvia Balzano, Ronald Gallimore and Claude Goldenberg found that a broader understanding of education exists in Latino families, meaning that academics and morals come together and "lead to becoming a better person" (64). Morals are under-

stood as the foundation for learning and knowledge about right and wrong, developing respect and correct behavior, family unity, good manners, and the "right path."

Within school settings, the books show children learning about themes such as hurricanes, *parrandas*, and Puerto Rican history by exploring connections and differences. Outside of school, children are depicted as learning by engaging with grandparents, relatives, and neighbors. *Grandma's Records* and *Grandma's Gift* capture the life of a grandmother who passes on her cultural pride and Puerto Rican heritage to her grandson every summer. Together, they explore music; New York as a diverse community; the use of English, Spanish, and code-switching; food preparation; and the influence of Spain, Africa, and indigenous Taínos in Puerto Rican culture.

Educación also refers to children having a better childhood than their immigrant parents and, consequently, an adult life with access to opportunities. Tina Durant found that *educación* and school are valued as tools for life improvement. Alice Quioko and Annette Daoud found that having a better life supports becoming bilingual and bicultural while maintaining native culture and identity. Two stories highlight the struggles of Puerto Rican immigrant families who recently moved to the United States: *Elena's Big Move* and *Estrellita se despide de su isla/Estrellita Says Good-Bye to Her Island* address fears of forgetting Puerto Rico, leaving loved ones, and not coming back. Both title characters rely on loving families and their communities left behind in Puerto Rico. They also rely on the communities within their new context, the U.S., which support them in developing a sense of belonging through the negotiation of cultural practices that keep them connected and rooted to Puerto Rican practices as they develop a bicultural identity.

Latino-Puerto Ricans families rely on their family and community, including school, to keep learning about both cultures and languages. For example, Velasquez challenges the myth of Latinos not being interested in speaking English by portraying a grandmother who is a knowledgeable bicultural member of her society and who becomes bilingual through interactions with her grandson, Eric. While the grandmother introduces Eric to the vibrant Puerto Rican community of *La Marqueta* in New York, he translates homework and other texts for her. The

books describe the process of becoming bilingual and bicultural through social interaction within relationships based on mutual respect, dialogue, and a desire for learning with each other.

Another strategy for becoming bicultural is a life that entails moving back-and-forth between the United States and Puerto Rico. The books show families visiting the island or the mainland throughout the year for reasons such as attending a baseball game at the Yankee Stadium, spending summer break learning about the island's flora and fauna, or joining Christmas' *parrandas* while also escaping from the cold winters of the East coast. Children growing up in this way, like the main character in *Mimi's Parranda*, struggle when family circumstances (such as a new baby) mean changes in their regular schedule to visit Puerto Rico.

Latinos are lazy

The books portray hard working parents who rely on extended family, especially grandparents or neighbors, for support when one (*The Poet Upstairs*) or both parents (*Grandma's Gift*, *Grandma's Records*, and *The Day the Animals Came*) work. The authors also depict parents encountering options and opportunities in the job market. Books set on the island only depict fishing, agriculture, and coaching of a sports team as available jobs. Representing a colonial discourse, this image places Puerto Rico in the distant past, one that denies historical changes and a possibility of change (Mills). It also positions Puerto Rico as economically dependent and incapable of offering inhabitants options to balance family and work obligations.

Books partially or completely set in the U.S. offer a wider range of possibilities for hard working parents. In *Elena's Big Move*, Elena's father moves to Indiana because of his job; in *Estrellita se despide de su isla/Estrellita Says Good-Bye to Her Island*, Estrellita's father moves to New York and has been offered a job interview; and in *The Day the Animals Came*, Ria's parents are both working in order to seek "a better life." These stories represent the "American Dream" through parents' expectations of moving in order to provide a better life for the family. These books also represent families who juggle prioritizing family and work due to economic circumstances. Those living in the U.S. are positioned as hard workers within a world of opportunities, while Puerto Ricans living

on the island are portrayed as investing more time with family than at work, and their work choices do not reflect the variety of careers available in this urbanized society. Books set in the U.S. do not specify the types of jobs available for parents or caregivers but do describe adults as being forced to spend long periods of time away from their children due to work restrictions, suggesting differences around how both countries experience and prioritize work and family.

Challenging Single Stories

Puerto Ricans are the second largest Latino community in the U.S. and a strong diverse cultural community on the island. Like other “minority” cultures in the U.S., they are subjected to incomplete, single stories that represent a deficient view of Latino-Puerto Ricans. Given Puerto Rico’s sociopolitical status as a U.S. territory and Latinos as a group whose experiences of colonization are similar to that of former colonized countries, a postcolonial lens was utilized in this study to analyze fifteen picture books with Puerto Rican characters, settings, and themes.

These books were written primarily by authors with extensive experience with Puerto Rican cultures, including stories from their childhood memories. The books challenge colonial discourses, providing examples of resistance. The first area of focus in this study was on rural images of an exotic island. By themselves, these books can send an outdated representation of the island that supports the binary of Puerto Rico as underdeveloped and the U.S. as developed. However, other titles contribute a more balanced representation of Puerto Rico’s diverse landscape. A balanced contemporary depiction respects the physical and geographic differences between the island and the mainland while allowing space for the reader to identify connections between both places around physical attributes and cultural practices.

The second concern was how the stories challenge assumptions about Latino families. The books challenge myths of Latinos as being lazy and Latino families not valuing education. Families are portrayed as hardworking and concerned about providing their children with a better childhood. Characters struggle with prioritizing family and work once they move to the U.S. Furthermore, parents, extended family, and community members are committed to children becoming bicultural, bilingual, lifelong learners, and

“better” persons.

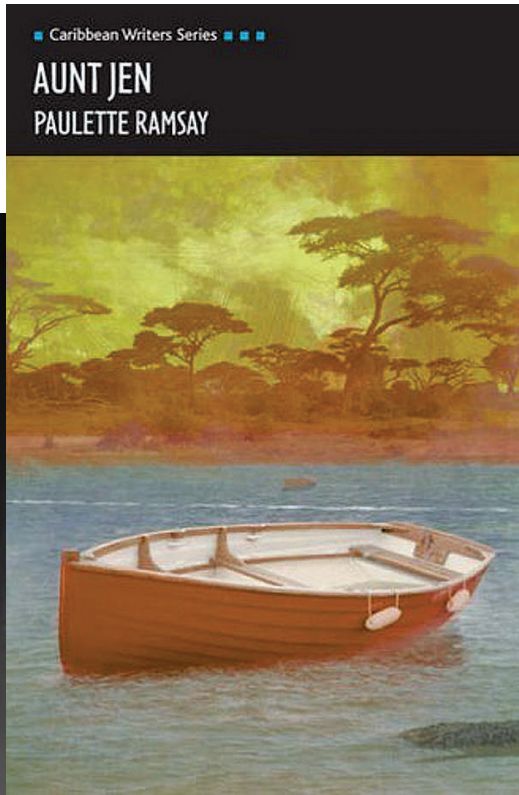
Children’s literature is a representation of social discourses and perspectives. Like Kathy G. Short, I am committed to creating opportunities both inside and outside the classroom that support readers in developing a critical eye. In order to challenge the dangers of a single story about Puerto Rican cultures and identities, readers need stories that reflect the wide range of experiences and perspectives lived by Puerto Ricans on the island and around the world. Readers deserve stories that allow them to explore connections and differences within cultural communities so they can build meaning that goes beyond social myths and narrow understandings.



MARÍA V. ACEVEDO, a graduate of the University of Arizona, is an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, her interests are global children’s literature, especially stories portraying the lives of Latino/as, intercultural understandings of young children, and story, inquiry and play as transformative experiences in early childhood education.

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Paulette Ramsay and the the cover of *Aunt Jen*

“A Different Sunshine”: Writing Jamaican National Identity through a Girl’s Coming-of-Age Story in Paulette Ramsay’s “Aunt Jen”

Paige Gray

This article considers the ways in which Paulette Ramsay’s epistolary novel *Aunt Jen* (2002) dually chronicles the coming-of-age of its young protagonist Sunshine and the newly independent Jamaica through letters written to an absent mother in the 1970s. Amid the process of contributing to a national literature that reflects Jamaica’s cultural heritage of women figures and women writers, *Aunt Jen* promotes the search for and actualization of individual and national autonomy through the act of writing—an act of identity formation and reclamation.

Near the conclusion of Paulette Ramsay’s epistolary novel *Aunt Jen* (2002), the narrator, Sunshine, makes a crucial assertion. In considering the girl she was when she began writing letters from her rural Jamaican home to her mother living in England—a woman she calls Aunt Jen—and through assessing the young woman she has become since that time, Sunshine realizes “life has a totally different meaning . . . now” (97). She declares, “I am a different Sunshine” (97). Significantly, with the discovery of this new sense of identity, Sunshine asserts her desire to remain in Jamaica and refuses her mother’s offer to live in England. She “want[s] to stay right here” and does not want to “play hopscotch with [her] life” (97), for

she sees her birthplace as an important part of who she is. In Sunshine’s letters to her mother—which date from 1970 to 1974, roughly a decade after Jamaica’s 1962 independence—the young girl writes herself into this stronger position of self-awareness, similar to the cultural movement of the last half-century in which Jamaican writers have attempted to use literature as a means to build Jamaican national identity.

Sunshine’s journey parallels that of her country in its efforts to achieve self-reliance and autonomy. Within a place rooted in matriarchal tradition, readers witness the young girl Sunshine transform into a variation of the “Jamaica Oman” celebrated in Louise Bennett’s 1982 poem. Considering Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller winning a second

term on the occasion of the country's jubilee year in 2012, the maturation of Jamaica into a strong "mother" nation further evinces itself. On the event of her inauguration, Simpson-Miller told Jamaicans that the country must continue to work toward self-reliance:

As we continue our journey, this is the Jubilee Year of Jamaican Independence. This 50th Anniversary year will be a time for reflection on the lessons of the past . . . we now need to complete the circle of independence. . . . This nation requires the strength, the creativity, the innovation and the steely courage of every Jamaican man, woman, youth and child. . . . Let us form a strong bond of patriotic unity and let us move forward together on this journey into our collective future.

In this essay, I explore the ways in which *Aunt Jen* advocates the search for and actualization of individual and national autonomy through writing. The text itself participates in contributing to a national literature that reflects Jamaica's cultural heritage—one predominated by a rich tradition of women figures and women writers. Such a national literature functions as part of the "strong bond of patriotic unity" that Simpson-Miller wants to build. More specifically, Sunshine's coming-of-age story corresponds to Jamaica's coming-of-age after it gained independence from the United Kingdom. While focusing on the writing process of an adolescent girl experiencing her own personal transition and development, the text concurrently renders the formative state of Jamaican national consciousness and its struggle in the aftermath of colonization.

Caribbean literary scholar G. R. Coulthard has written that within the Caribbean islands, dating back to the 1930s, there was "a connection . . . between an awakening of a national consciousness and a desire for independence and the burgeoning of a new national literature" (qtd. in Oakley 93). *Aunt Jen* depicts the "awakening of a national consciousness" through the "awakening" Sunshine experiences, as both Jamaica and Sunshine wrestle with understanding themselves apart from their "mothers"—the colonial influence of England and Aunt Jen, respectively. Ramsay's novel suggests that, through writing, the young girl or young country existing within post-colonialism can individuate; Ramsay thus partici-

pates in promoting what children's literature scholars Donnaræ MacCann and Katharine Capshaw Smith call the "rise of a culturally redemptive children's literature from Africa and the Caribbean," a movement that "signals a new approach to reconstituting Black identity, one that comments unreservedly on neocolonialism and the challenges it presents to Black experience" (137). I argue that Ramsay's novel "reconstitute[s]" the "Black identity" of Jamaica by endorsing the nation's ability to create a "different Sunshine"—a literature and national identity that looks forward in order to "complet[e] the circle of independence," as Simpson-Miller advocates, while simultaneously embracing its long-held traditions, rich history, and matriarchal background often associated with the legend of Jamaican National Hero¹ Nanny Maroon. *Aunt Jen* illustrates the ways in which mother-figures and their stories of the past (or their lack of storytelling, as is the case with Jen) enable or disable the ability to create one's own story—for the individual Jamaican and for the country itself.

Identity, Writing, and the Caribbean: A Critical Background

In order to better understand why and how Aunt Jen communicates authenticating the self and nation through writing and storytelling, the novel must be situated within a wider context of Caribbean literature, Caribbean children's literature, and postcolonial literary theory. Critical work in these fields attempts to show the symbiotic relationship between place and identity and how colonialism disrupted, and continues to disrupt, the formation of identity for those born in the Caribbean. Indeed, Jamaican National Hero Norman Manley, who served as chief minister and premier before the country gained independence from the United Kingdom, said when he founded the People's National Party in 1938 that "[t]here is a tremendous difference between *living in a place* and *belonging to it* and feeling that your own life and destiny is [sic] irrevocably bound up in the life and destiny of that place" (qtd. in Sherlock 390; emphasis added). Critics have argued that it is through literature that writers of Caribbean nations can find both identity and power, as well as alleviate their sense of colonial displacement. "One of the basic impulses in Caribbean thought is undeniably the need to reconceptualize power," asserts Caribbean literature scholar Michael J. Dash (107). He sees this

theme—"the desire to establish a new authority, to repossess time and space"—evolve in Caribbean culture through language, deeming "this pursuit of an ordering and ordaining vision" as "essentially a poetic one" (107).

But *how* does a national literature assuage displacement and restore agency and identity? Within the Caribbean, scholars and theorists have suggested that power can come with the acknowledgment and embracement of African heritage, as well as with the subversion and reinterpretation of colonialist cultural influence, an act that can be actualized through the writing and storytelling of one's particular history. In the case of Jamaica, Mervyn Alleyne contends that its "society and culture is at the same time both being and becoming" as Jamaicans reconcile the effects of colonial displacement (3). Despite its history of slavery and colonization, Jamaican society largely derives from African traditions and African perspectives, Alleyne writes, because African slaves brought with them "the acquired skills, memories, habits, predispositions, cognitive orientations, and language—all beneath the surface of conscious, and persistent even in the worst conditions" (6). From Alleyne's viewpoint, Jamaican society remains in a state of "becoming" as it continues to recover parts of its displaced past; it is "humanly and politically essential" that Jamaica become more "aware of its cultural heritage" (3). The awareness that Alleyne describes can only evolve from the stories and histories created by Jamaicans in their literature and art.

Aunt Jen represents a compelling example of Jamaican literature as a means of cultural awareness in that it depicts the very state of "becoming" through Sunshine's physical, intellectual, and emotional maturation. But the novel also introduces questions of gender and genre in its focus on the growth of a girl/woman writer. Because of Sunshine's and Ramsay's gender, *Aunt Jen* can be read in terms of women's agency within Jamaica or the Caribbean, and because of Sunshine's age, it could be considered a novel for children and young adults. In its totality, *Aunt Jen* shows writing as a necessary component in the identity process of nation, woman, and child, but does the overlap of these processes have cultural resonance for Jamaica? I want to briefly address how both women's literature and children's literature have been read as a means of writing the Caribbean nation so that we can then interpret the significance of

their convergence in *Aunt Jen*.

Belinda Edmondson sees the literature produced by Caribbean women as a literature that embodies West Indian consciousness, and thus acts to undo the Eurocentric male concept of author and authorship utilized by Caribbean male authors. Edmondson interprets much of the male-authored Caribbean literature considered canonical to be expressions of "Victorian Englishness," not expressions of what it is to be West Indian (2; emphasis in original). To construct a literature that speaks in the language of the Caribbean and to build a national identity, Edmondson argues that the woman writer must challenge the conceit of the author. Since the end of slavery in the nineteenth century, men in the Caribbean have endeavored to fit the mold of Victorian gentleman and have used literature as an avenue to achieve this, Edmondson suggests (5-6). Michael J. Dash similarly maintains that Caribbean women writers, who "are acutely aware of the negative, and even neurotic, consequences of powerlessness" and who possess a "capacity to interrogate and demystify systems of total explanation," can write and craft stories in a manner that reflects the cultural and national identity of colonized Caribbean countries (109). Literature by Caribbean women, Edmondson and Dash essentially say, assumes the voice of a nation and a people that have been colonized, as opposed to imitating the voice and style of the colonizer.

Meanwhile, scholars of children's literature maintain the importance of that genre in building a sense of place, identity, and cultural heritage. Donnarae MacCann and Katharine Capshaw Smith describe the "power of children's culture, whether in the schoolhouse or at home, to shape identity" (137). And because some Caribbean government entities still "retain a residue of the colonial mindset," MacCann and Smith reason that "[c]hildren's literature may well be one of the best sites for exposing colonial structures of power, since cultural bias has been authorized so plainly through the school system" (137). Part of the "power" that children's culture and its literature has as an agent of national and individual identity in the Caribbean comes with the ability of children's novels to incorporate the region's oral tradition of storytelling and folklore (such as the folk tales of Anansi, the spider-trickster figure) derived from its West African heritage. Cynthia

James states that "the present phase" of Caribbean children's literature is "marked by a fusion of oral and literary agendas—a fusion propelled by changing concepts of education and literacy" (165). "Changing concepts," of course, could be used to describe the Westernization of most cultures, and the emergence of a *written* Caribbean children's literature could arguably work to promote ideologies of former colonial powers. However, we can also interpret these "changing concepts" as the means through which those of Caribbean nations can produce lasting records of their voice and history that cannot be ignored or forgotten—particularly not ignored by children, who, if exposed to such records throughout their youth, can mature into adulthood with a cultural and national awareness that enables personal agency.

Finding (Her)story

Aunt Jen presents a junction between the identity-formation processes at work in Caribbean's children's literature and in Caribbean women's writing. Through Sunshine's letters to her mother, we see Sunshine evolve as a writer, a storyteller, and a Jamaican. Her writing allows her to recognize her abilities and ambitions, and it allows her to reach the realization that her mother has abandoned her. The silence of Jen lets Sunshine hear the stories of her grandmother, Ma—stories of Jamaica and Jamaican folklore that embolden Sunshine's perception of self through defining her cultural heritage. Indeed, after she hears stories from her grandmother about her ancestry of strong women warriors, Sunshine proclaims, "I am going to be a lion like Ma" (73). Ramsay's novel portrays more than just a young girl's search for identity, but that of a nation as Jamaica must establish itself after independence from the United Kingdom. Because of an absent mother—one with no voice and no stories, but whose influence loomed large—Sunshine cannot assert or fully articulate herself in the beginning of the novel. Like Sunshine, Jamaica

must diminish the colonizing effects its "mother" (or its English parent nation) holds on its consciousness by listening to and accepting stories from its past. The text, by depicting Sunshine as she writes herself into being through an awareness and expression of heritage, shows Jamaica's journey from dependent colony to independent nation by way of cultural nationalism and through the efforts of strong female voices.

Sunshine's first letter to Jen, dated 1970, just eight years into Jamaica's independence, describes a series of recent dreams Sunshine has had featuring her mother. In these dreams, Jen remains elusive and out of reach for Sunshine. The first dream Sunshine discusses recounts her jumping from a sinking ship into the ocean only to have Jen swim away from her. Ma, to whom Sunshine explains these dreams, connects the imagery back to Jen's relinquishment of Jamaica for the former empire, particularly after Sunshine describes the ship. "She said that it looked just like the one you went to England on," Sunshine writes, and Ma declares the dream "is not a good one" (1). The actions of the dream signal Sunshine's

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state of anxiety and confusion about her identity as a result of her mother's absence, for not only was the ship sinking, but Sunshine herself "began to sink" (1). Ma explicitly links the ship to Jen and the disruption of the family and indicates Jen's betrayal of her Jamaican home. The ship sinks and Jen "sw[i]m[s] away"—actions implying unsteady foundations and rootlessness (1). These are the unstable images Sunshine carries of her mother, and because

of Jen's desertion, Sunshine lacks self-understanding and is beginning to "sink." Sunshine cannot see who she is as a girl or a Jamaican because she cannot see her mother—in both literal and figurative terms; she cannot physically see the characteristics and familial traits that bond her to Jen, and thus she cannot psychically see her links to her Jamaican heritage and history. She tells Jen in the first letter, "You didn't

have a face in the dreams. Well, maybe I just didn't see your face, but I know it was you. In any case, I don't know what your face looks like—I really don't remember" (1). As a consequence of Sunshine not knowing what Jen's "face looks like," she does not know what her own "face," or self, looks like; she becomes defaced, invisible. "[Y]ou didn't seem to see me at all," Sunshine writes of Jen's conduct during the dream. "You walked away with the other people without seeming to notice that I was there" (2).

During the period in which Sunshine writes, Jamaica grappled with its own self-perception and autonomy. In the years following independence, the country faced the challenge of discerning itself and asserting authority as an entity separate from the United Kingdom after centuries of dependency. In the article "Independent Jamaica: Ten Years after 1962," published in a 1972 issue of *Jamaican Journal*, Douglas Hall outlines the dilemma in which Jamaica finds itself after the official proclamations and celebrations of August 6, 1962. In post-independence Jamaica, Hall observes timidity and lack of self-awareness. He cites a need to "move with confidence" that corresponds to Sunshine's "sink"-ing (2); both suffer from a history that has hindered how they view themselves. Hall positions Jamaica, after surviving enslavement and serving under colonialism, in the same "coming-of-age" state in which Sunshine exists throughout *Aunt Jen*, a period Hall configures as the time to "learn" and "define ourselves as a nation" (3, 2). *Aunt Jen* shows us the capacity writing has in the endeavor to solidify identity for marginalized societies or segments of society and during the developmental process from child to adult.

Writing (Her)story

Sunshine's first letter hints at the significance and power that she will find through writing these letters—not for any line of communication Sunshine will establish with Jen but for the line of communication she will create with herself. She tries to explain why she decided to write to her far-away mother in the first place and says, "I was just sitting down doing nothing so I thought I would write to you. Actually, I like to write. Sometimes I write poems or letters to myself so I enjoy doing it" (4). Jen's absence left Sunshine with a void of information that is generally provided by the immediate mother figure, from basic knowledge that nurtures the young as they discov-

er the world to a notion of family. Ma substitutes for Jen, but Sunshine's awareness that her mother is absent renders a space of blankness in her consciousness, a gap. The need to fill this gap seems to have initiated Sunshine's writing. She intuited that writing "poems" or "letters" to *herself* would help her in some way. Indeed, she "like[s]" and "enjoy[s]" writing. It is after Sunshine begins writing for herself that she perceives the need to connect with Jen. For after she experiences the enjoyment of writing letters to herself, she wants to further understand who she is and thus looks to her mother. As the novel progresses, we learn of the irresponsible, negligent nature of Sunshine's father, but his failure does not hang over Sunshine in the same way the absence of Jen does, indicating the crucial role the mother plays in the Jamaican private sphere, inside the domestic space. Sunshine wants stories—a sense of heritage and identity—from *her mother*. She already knows her father cannot, or will not, fulfill this. And though Sunshine, in recalling Ma's admonishments, says "I spend too much time writing writing and my writing getting me nowhere," we come to see her writing taking her somewhere, as it eventually enables her to write her own story (6).

Sunshine becomes a more skillful writer, in both craft and in her ability to self-reflect, against the backdrop of a critical period in Jamaica's national and political development: the 1972 campaign for prime minister that saw Michael Manley's rise to power. Within Sunshine's classroom, young students involve themselves in the excitement surrounding the campaign. In a letter from January of 1972, Sunshine tries to explain the political interest to Jen, saying, "Well all of us talk about it a lot and we can't help it because all the teachers encourage us to talk about the elections in class and everywhere you go now people are talking about it" (55). Even Sunshine's reserved, quiet grandfather participates in the national stir Manley produces. He begins "giv[ing]" Sunshine "money to buy the *Gleaner* for him . . . because he has to read about what Joshua said at his political meetings" (56). "Joshua" refers to Manley. The nickname took hold after Manley's 1970 visit to Ethiopia and the event of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie presenting Manley with the gift of a rod (Campbell). According to *Gleaner* writer Howard Campbell, "When the PNP [People's National Party] leader waved the ivory-tipped, ebo-

ny-bodied 'Rod of Correction' at meetings, it stirred the masses and added to his image of Joshua, the Old Testament figure who led the enslaved Jews out of Jericho." Manley, cognizant of the country's religiously conservative nature, uses the biblical imagery and rhetoric of Joshua to his advantage and implores Jamaicans to follow him and his "Rod of Correction" so that together they can "correct" and rewrite Jamaica's history of displacement and alienation. Sunshine, despite living in a small, rural community, experiences the effects of the "excitement" surrounding Jamaica's growing national consciousness—even her "Uncle Eddy walks around with his rod these days. He says it is a rod of correction like Joshua's rod" (Ramsay 56). The enthusiasm Manley created stemmed from his appeal to Jamaicans to look back toward their African roots for a sense of identity so that the country could move forward as a nation, a call to action similar to ones Marcus Garvey and others promoted in the first half of the twentieth century. During this early post-independence period, in its position as a sovereign nation, we see Jamaica's desire to take responsibility for its political and cultural future. In a 2006 article for *The Gleaner*, Arnold Bertram further explains, "[Manley] roused them [Jamaicans] to a consciousness of the latent powers within themselves. No one spoke with greater passion about the anguish of the poor and the dispossessed, nor described their cry for help with greater eloquence."

Manley's campaign provoked a national exploration of self and heritage, which Ramsay reflects in the text. In a letter subsequent to Sunshine's news of "Joshua," she tells Jen about "feeling really good" after her discovery of Ma's connection to Jamaican National Hero Nanny Maroon (72). Prior to writing this letter, Sunshine had asked Ma "if she knew anything about slavery," suggesting her curiosity concerning the origins of both her family and her nation. To Sunshine's surprise, Ma replied with uncharacteristic liveliness:

Right away she just started to talk and talk and talk. She said her mother, who was very proud of her parents, told her stories which she heard from her mother, who was told them by her parents, who were told them by their parents, who were told them by their parents and so the stories came right down from slavery days from

one generation to another and another and another until it got to Ma. (72)

It is here where the power of voice, story, and history from one mother intersects with the power of silence from another. Jen's silence has broken the oral tradition Ma illustrates in her account of family "stories" being passed down from "parents" and "mother" figures. Ma now must substitute for Jen in order to ensure the family history lives on and in order to help Sunshine build her sense of self through this knowledge of her heritage.

The ease and interest that Ma has "to talk and talk and talk" about their shared legacy evinces the pivotal function oral storytelling holds in Jamaican culture. Ma readily opens up with these stories because she knows their value and because they are beloved to her, which surprises her granddaughter. "I could never imagine that Ma had such strong sentimental memories about her maroon heritage," Sunshine remarks (72). The text puts equal emphasis on the pivotal function of *women* and their storytelling, from which we can extrapolate the crucial role women have played in shaping Jamaica from more informal stations—stations outside politics and business before we see the introduction of women such as Simpson-Miller and others into more public sectors. So though Sunshine's father has also more or less abandoned her, the text focuses on Jen's missing voice. Similarly, while Gramps provides a competent guardian for Sunshine, he remains a quiet figure throughout. Sunshine says "he is not interested in anything but his animals, his land and his pipe" and "does not talk or interfere in anything that's happening in the house" (12, 42). He is essentially without stories, and it falls upon Ma to tell the histories of the family and the Jamaican people.

Writing and History are "Real Real"

Aunt Jen demonstrates the potential for nation-building through an identity-building that relies on an authentic Caribbean voice. Ramsay intensifies this point by making her protagonist a girl moving into adulthood, and she can thus depict Sunshine's transformation through the acquisition and acceptance of her legacy. There have long been cries from writers, critics, and educators of the need for more children's and young adult books that portray Jamaican (and other Caribbean) experiences—that in order

to grow up and achieve a strong sense of self, children must hear and read stories about them and not be schooled in narratives from the former empire. In a 1968 *Jamaican Journal* review of Jamaica-raised Andrew Salkey's children's books, C. R. Gray writes that "there is no doubt that there is some readiness in Jamaican schools for material reflecting the pupils' experiences and with fewer references which the pupils cannot recognize" (46). Sarah F. Manhunt states that even in the twenty-first century, a number of children's novels deemed "Caribbean" are authored by non-Caribbean writers and, therefore, work to the detriment of "authenticity, quality, and cultural sensitivity" needed in children's literature (279). Caribbean children's literature in particular, Manhunt argues, needs to be authored by Caribbean-born writers in order to neutralize the weight of "colonialism" and the "inherent problems of power relationships" during the crucial identity-formation period of young readers (279).

When Ma opens up and tells the stories of their Jamaican ancestors to Sunshine, Sunshine attains a new pride and a new purpose. She was lost and "sink"ing at the opening of the novel but finds meaning after Ma fills the void of story and history left by Jen. "History is real real" for Sunshine now (Ramsay 73). For ostensibly the first time, Sunshine exhibits self-confidence and feelings of nationalism because she has obtained this knowledge about "real real" history—which is also her story:

Everything I know from history class suddenly turned real real through Ma's stories about her parents. Ma's great great grandparents were maroons. My great great grandmother was with . . . Nanny . . . Now I know why Ma is so strong and fiery at her age. . . . They were skilful (sic) and brave. I come from a line of fighters! (73)

Empowered by her maroon origins, Sunshine wants to learn more and document this history:

Maybe one day I'll do some research on Ma's family history. . . . Ma says she is sure that I wouldn't find much because in those days people would just tell their children things and later on the children would tell their children and so on and so on. They never did so much writing like nowadays. (72-73)

Aunt Jen represents the "fusion of oral and literary agendas" in Caribbean children's literature that Cynthia James discusses. Sunshine's letters render an element of literary Caribbean-ness through her search for identity, but they simultaneously record Jamaican heritage and emphasize the importance of oral tradition (which is further evidenced in Sunshine's incorporation of patois words and the use of repetition, seen with "big big"). Sunshine comprehends the need for stories, but she also perceives the necessity for and authority of writing. In recording the stories and oral history of her family, she helps legitimate herself, her past, and Jamaica. Her writing serves as evidence that can be re-read. Jen threatened to silence history by fleeing to England, but Sunshine ensures this will not happen again by writing her story for herself and for future generations. By proclaiming she is "a different Sunshine," Sunshine exemplifies the larger national desire for a different Jamaica—a Jamaica that will fuse the stories of its past into the writing of its future.

It is important to note, however, that Ramsay tempers any interpretations self and nation that may veer into territory too idealistic. As evinced in Simpson-Miller's speech, despite notable strides (including the very election of a woman prime minister), Jamaica continues to struggle in its journey toward true independence as the aftershocks of colonialism linger. The conclusion of *Aunt Jen* places Sunshine in the United States. Through a letter written by Sunshine's daughter to Jen, we learn of Jen's legal interference with Sunshine's inheritance from her grandparents and Sunshine's subsequent refusal to communicate with Jen. The text seemingly negates the pride of national and self-identity Sunshine shows after hearing Ma's stories and in her refusal to move to England through the ending's revelation that Sunshine left Jamaica. Or does it? Ultimately, *Aunt Jen* positions itself as an idealistic, realist, and prescriptive novel (possibly even a Jeremiad) as it warns Jamaicans to listen to, embrace, and write the stories of their nation—or else displacement, exile, and a sense of "sink"-ing identity will continue; there will be no "different Sunshine." The novel revels in a profound love for Jamaica and investment in its future while still illustrating the obstacles present within the national psyche. Ramsay (whose biography on the back cover of the Caribbean Writers Series edition of *Aunt Jen* includes one sentence: "Paulette

"A DIFFERENT SUNSHINE": WRITING JAMAICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH A GIRL'S
COMING-OF-AGE STORY IN PAULETTE RAMSAY'S "AUNT JEN"

Ramsay is a Jamaican.") writes the story of Jamaica's search for identity in hopes that both young and adult readers can recover and reaffirm Sunshine's former pride of place and her people.

¹ The Order of the National Hero is an official designation from the Parliament of Jamaica.



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In a series of declarative sentences wonderfully illustrated by Matt James, author Laurel Croza quickly sketches the experiences of a young, possibly First Nations, girl whose family moves from the remote bush area of northern Saskatchewan to central Toronto. James's impressionistic illustrations perfectly match the disjointedness of the child's experiences as she misses "There" but adapts (as children do) to "Here." The locations could not be different, as there offers green wilderness, wildlife, and traditional folk and food ways. Here is a home on Birch Street, with no birches in sight, though there are groomed lawns and flowerbeds. And while there holds memories of home and family, here offers a new friend just the right age and all the wonders of a major city. This is perfectly imagined book: its illustrations intertwine with its brief text to offer a satisfyingly complete story. Any child who has moved will understand and be comforted by the story, and James's play on various tropes (for example the wild moose in There and stuffed moose in Here) offers the kind of reliable continuity that uprooted children will love.

Roxanne Harde

BOOKIRID POSTCARDS



From There to Here
Laurel Croza

Illustrated by Matt James
Toronto: Groundwood, 2014
Unp.
ISBN: 9781554983650
Age Group: 4 to 104 years old.

This is the story of two roosters. It has been illustrated by two outstanding Iranian illustrators, Ali Khodaie and Rashin Kheirieh. When the roosters come out of their coops, they try to fight with each other to show their beauty. However, the illustrators ask them to wait and instead of fighting, participate in a race, then, ask the reader to choose the most beautiful and euphonious one. So the illustrators work on their cocks and ask two prominent children's poets to recite a poem for the cocks to sing for the day of competition. This book has been written creatively with the theme of peace in mind. Though it is fantasy tale, it makes use of real elements to make it believable for the child. It is reader oriented and interactive. Moreover, the author leaves the end of the story open to interpretation for the child.

Morteza Khosronejad

BOOKIRID POSTCARDS



The Tale of War and Peace
Illustrator: Mohammad Ali Baniyasadi

Poems by: Mostafa Rahmadoost, Shokouh Ghasemnia.
Tehran: AmirKabir Publishing House, 2013-2014
Age Group: 4 to 104 years old.



From the cover of *Daywards* by Anthony Eaton

The Perfect Place to Set a Novel about the End of the World? Trends in Australian Post-Nuclear Fiction for Young Adults

Elizabeth Braithwaite

"Australia has a fascinating yet contradictory nuclear history," writes Jeffrey Lantis, and this ambiguity can be seen in the post-nuclear young adult fiction produced in that country. British, American and German speculative fiction for young readers set after nuclear disaster tends to suggest reasons for the disaster, and by implication, to position readers towards acting to stop the disaster happening in the real world. By contrast, Australian writers of both fantasy and speculative fiction tend to be less concerned with the cause of the disaster than with how the nuclear apocalypse can be used to explore a range of cultural issues which may appear to have little or nothing to do with nuclear disaster. Working with the notion of apocalypse as both revelation and, more popularly, as a violent "end event" (Curtis), this paper explores why young adult post-nuclear fiction produced in Australia tends to be different from that produced in Britain, the USA and Germany, and demonstrates how the nuclear disaster is used in a selection of Australian young adult post-disaster fiction to address cultural issues, particularly those dealing with Australia's Indigenous population, and with the contemporary treatment of refugees

During her 1959 visit to Australia to film Neville Shute's post-nuclear *On the Beach*, actress Ava Gardner allegedly remarked, "*On the Beach* is a story about the end of the world, and Melbourne [Australia] sure is the right place to film it" (Yallop). Although the attribution to Gardner is erroneous (see Yallop), the statement nonetheless presupposes a link between Australia and notions of apocalypse. As Roslyn Weaver writes, "Apocalypse as a genre allows considerable scope for writers . . . to articulate and address concerns and fears in the Australian cultural imagination" (187). Curtis explains that "Popularly, 'apocalypse' simply refers to a disastrous, violent and catastrophic end event" (5), but the term "apocalypse" itself means "revelation" (Curtis 5; Delbridge 82; Weaver 8) and is also associated with "divine prophecy concerning the end times and the final battle between good and evil" (Curtis 5). Given that post-disaster fiction is often connected with notions of apocalypse, either in the popular use

of the term apocalypse as defined by Curtis—that is, referring to a "violent and catastrophic event"—or in the sense of an event that brings about revelation, this paper will use the terms "post-disaster" and "post-apocalyptic" to refer to fiction set after a major disaster. Through the account of the disaster's aftermath, the fiction reveals and explores concerns that may, on the face of it, have little to do with the disaster itself, but which the text's setting allows to be investigated.

This paper will focus specifically on Australian young adult literature set after nuclear disaster to answer two questions: *How does nuclear post-disaster fiction produced in Australia differ from that produced in North America, Germany and the United Kingdom?* and *Given these differences, what does Australian post-nuclear fiction reveal about the social and cultural concerns of that country?*

There are two reasons for focusing specifically on post-nuclear texts. The first is that there are notable differences between Australian fiction and many of

its northern hemisphere counterparts. The second reason is that, as Jeffrey Lantis writes, "Australia has a fascinating yet contradictory nuclear history" (29). This ambiguity can be seen in its fiction. Unlike its close neighbour New Zealand, which has steered a determinedly anti-nuclear path (Frühling 152), Australia has been somewhat ambivalent in its relationship to nuclear energy. In the late 1970s, it came into the international uranium market as a major supplier (Clarke et al. 7); it is the third largest exporter of uranium, and it has the world's largest uranium reserves (see Nikitin and Vaughn 7). For almost 50 years, Australia's only "multi-purpose research reactor" was the High Flux Australian Reactor (HIFAR) built at Lucas Heights. This reactor

was used both for research and for manufacture of products for Australian "nuclear medicine and industry" before being supplanted in 2007 by the newer OPAL reactor (Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation).

Furthermore, despite providing a location for Britain to carry out

nuclear testing in the 1950s, Australia has neither been involved in the actual design of nuclear weapons (Clarke et al. 2) nor had its own such weapons; nonetheless, it had the expectation at least during the 1950s that, if necessary, it would be supported by US or UK nuclear weapons (Frühling 148). In 1970, Australia signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, ratifying it in 1973 (Clarke et al. 2). The terms of this treaty included the undertaking "to accept safeguards . . . on all source or special fissionable material in all peaceful nuclear activities . . . under its jurisdiction . . . for the exclusive purpose of verifying that such material is not diverted to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices" (Commonwealth of Australia).

There is also debate about whether Australia is, or ever has been, a likely target for nuclear attack. Various writers suggest that Australia's geographical location makes it seem less likely either to be attacked or to suffer from nuclear fallout in the event of northern hemisphere hostilities (see Weaver 68-9;

If the disaster is located on recognisably Australian shores in these texts, it usually comes about through damage to nuclear reactors

Williams 85).

In its study from more than thirty years ago of the possible impact on Australia of nuclear hostilities between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the Office of National Assessments believed that “Australian cities would probably be seen as ‘low priority nuclear targets’” but that “direct attacks were a possibility,” particularly in the latter stages of war (Dorling). By contrast, in 1980 the Defence Minister of the time, Jim Killen, informed parliament that Australia was likely to be a target for nuclear attack for being an ally to the US (AAP). More recently, in 2011 then Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd expressed concern that “North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile programs are a direct threat to Australia” (Alford).

This chequered relationship with nuclear energy is reflected in the young adult fiction produced in Australia. If nuclear disaster is located on recognisably Australian shores in these texts, it usually comes about through damage to nuclear reactors, as in Kerry Greenwood’s *Three Days* series, John Heffernan’s *CBD* and *GBH*, or Anthony Eaton’s *Darklands* trilogy (the first book of which is discussed below). Pamela Lamb’s *A Secondhand Dreaming* extends Australia’s relationship with nuclear power by having the disaster implicitly come about through a terrorist attack on PowerCo, which in the novel is a global supplier of nuclear energy and which has a branch in Australia (3-6). Whether the disaster is nuclear war or accidental detonation of weapons, the catastrophe rarely happens on Australian shores, or the setting is not recognisably Australian. For example, the disaster in Claire Zorn’s *The Sky so Heavy* (the second text for major discussion in this paper) occurs in northern Asia and the Gobi desert (25), and is one of the few Australian texts in which the disaster actually happens within the narrative. The implicitly nuclear disaster in Victor Kelleher’s *Taronga* has also happened far from Australia (94), and the possible contribution by nuclear waste to the environmental disaster in Caroline Macdonald’s *The Lake at the End of the World* is specified as coming “from the north” (95). By contrast, Isobelle Carmody’s *Obernewtyn* series is set after a nuclear disaster referred to as “The Great White” (1), but its location is unclear. The place names, however, suggest a Celtic or British setting rather than an Australian one: Morganna has obvious connections with Arthurian myth, and Saithwold

and Sawlney suggest respectively the English towns of Southwold and Sawley. Jill Dobson’s *The Inheritors*, which is set after a nuclear disaster that may or may not have been an accident and whose point of origin is never specified, is located primarily within a human-made Dome with no specific geographical location. Rare exceptions to the trend of not locating the detonation of nuclear weapons (accidental or otherwise) in Australia include the television show and novel *Quest Beyond Time*—part of the *Winners* series—in which it is implied that Sydney has been destroyed by nuclear war (34), and Paul Collins’ *The Earthborn Wars* in which Australia has been devastated by global nuclear war (*The Earthborn* 14, *The Skyborn* 67).

This trend of not having a specific location for the disaster, or of having it occur offshore, differs notably from many nuclear texts produced in the northern hemisphere. For example, in British writer Robert Swindells’ *Brother in the Land*, nuclear weapons are detonated, possibly accidentally, and it is made clear that the disaster is in relation to East and West conflicts, even if the detonation was accidental (1). In Swindells’ text, the city of Branford (the name invokes the city of Bradford in Yorkshire), amongst other places, is bombed. British author Louise Lawrence also depicts nuclear weapons being fired upon parts of England (8, 10) and compatriot Hugh Scott sets his *Why Weeps the Brogan?* after London has been hit by nuclear weaponry (102). German writer Gudrun Pausewang has the nuclear war in *The Last Children* strike a number of locations, including Fulda and Frankfurt (22, 91), American Gloria D. Miklowitz writes of a nuclear weapon accidentally fired upon Los Angeles (57), and fellow US writers Barbara and Scott Siegel, in *The Burning Land*, have nuclear hostilities occur between Russia and the USA, with it being deliberately left unclear who initiated the conflict (20).

Elsewhere (Braithwaite 8-16) I have argued that most post-disaster texts for young readers fall into one of three categories. The first is “survivor” texts, which are set during the disaster or immediately after it and in which the main task for the protagonists is simple survival. These are usually speculative texts. The second category comprises “social order” texts and includes narratives set some time after the disaster, in which a new type of society has developed, usually a dystopia. The third type of text is “quest/adventure,” in which the disaster creates a particular

kind of landscape in which an adventure takes place or creates the need for a particular kind of quest.

Not only is the nuclear disaster in Australian texts usually located offshore, or in a location without clear connection to a real-world referent, but the type of fiction produced in Australia also tends to be different from that produced in the northern hemisphere countries listed above. Unsurprisingly, given the ambivalent public view about the likelihood of Australia being a nuclear target, very little “survivor” young adult post-nuclear fiction has been produced in Australia in comparison with the northern hemisphere. All of the northern hemisphere texts listed above focus on how the protagonists will cope in the immediate aftermath of nuclear disaster (in *Why Weeps the Brogan?* the main characters are depicted some years after the disaster, but it is eventually revealed how they survived the nuclear catastrophe). By contrast, even Australian texts set after the destruction of nuclear reactors tend to be set many years after the event. Rare exceptions to this include the extracts from Billi’s diary in Heffernan’s *CBD*, parts of Greenwood’s *The Broken Wheel*, and most notably, Claire Zorn’s *The Sky So Heavy*.

This can, at least in part, be explained by Weaver’s statement from the introduction to this paper: “Apocalypse as a genre allows considerable scope for writers . . . to articulate and address concerns and fears in the Australian cultural imagination” (187). In the northern hemisphere texts listed above, the main concern is usually to position the young reader to consider how to act to prevent the disaster from becoming reality. For example, Matt in Miklowitz’s *After the Bomb* muses that, if there is ever any semblance of normality again in his life, he will try to do something “to stop grown-ups from playing ‘chicken’ with bombs” (155). Branwell, the wise, mentor figure in Swindells’ *Brother in the Land*, suggests that it is lessening of respect for life that led to the bombs being detonated (76), and the narrator in Pausewang’s *The Last Children* puts the responsibility for the disaster at the feet of people who believed that the threat of nuclear catastrophe was enough to stop it happening or who valued “comfort and prosperity more than anything else” (121). By contrast, Australian texts set after nuclear disaster have tended, overall, not to focus so much on the reasons for the disaster but rather to use the post-nuclear scenario to explore

other concerns. As Weaver writes, “Australian speculative literature . . . that invoke an apocalyptic discourse often reveal ambivalence about the land and anxieties about invasion, colonization, white existence and Indigenous land rights” (187).

The two texts discussed in the next section show how the nuclear scenario is used to reveal concerns about two particular issues of concern in the Australian cultural and social consciousness: Eaton’s *Nightpeople* foregrounds issues around treatment of Indigenous people, and Zorn’s *The Sky so Heavy* creates a post-nuclear scenario revealing contemporary anxieties about refugees seeking asylum.

Nightpeople

Eaton’s *Darklands* series is set after major climate change has caused flooding and the eruption of volcanoes, which damaged fission reactors and facilities across a range of countries where nuclear waste is stored, resulting in widespread devastation. Australia is one of these countries (*Skyfall* 94).

The story centres on Saria, the last healthy child to be born in the desert area known as the Darklands, which is quarantined because it has been poisoned many years ago by the nuclear disaster (*Nightpeople* 192). Although the Darklanders are not specifically linked with Indigenous Australians, there are obvious parallels between the two peoples, with the Darklanders’ emphasis on Dreaming and the relationship between land and spirit (See Australian Government; White and Turton, “*Nightpeople, Skyfall, Daywards*”).

There is also a clear link between the Skypeople and the European colonizers with their technological skills. Dreamer Wanji explains to Saria what life was like before the disaster:

Two types of people lived here, then: Dreamers like you and me, and also Skypeople. Dreamers were the first. They came from the old ones and they could feel the Earthmother through the soles of their feet and the palms of their hands. [. . .]. The Skypeople came later and they were different. . . . Just like Dreamers used the land to listen, Skypeople used the sky. They owned the sky, and had powerful ways with it. (*Nightpeople* 190)

Although the Dreamers and the Skypeople mingle, learning skills from each other, the Skypeople are never able to communicate with the Earthmother as well as the Dreamers, and the disaster comes about as a result of the Skypeople's greed (191). Because of the poisoned soil, people who lived on what has become known as Darklands were dying, and so the Skypeople built the Darkedge to prevent people leaving. Both Dreamers and Skypeople were trapped in the Darklands, and both were separated from their own way of life: "so Dreamers and Skypeople lived together, and Darklanders were born" (193). The forced removal of certain Darklander children by the Nightpeople has echoes of the Stolen Generation—that is, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children who were removed from their homes by government or church mission agencies and fostered by non-Indigenous families or sent to institutions (see National Sorry Day Committee).

In *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations*, Bradford et al. speak of "utilising processes of remembering by envisioning new modes of collaboration and engagement that address the dysfunctional relations of colonialism" (9). Eaton's trilogy concludes with a possible new way forward for both the Nightpeople and the Darklanders. Rather than seeing themselves as either Nightpeople or Darklanders, the young protagonists need to realise that they "have a bigger purpose now" and that the Nightpeople and Darklanders in fact need each other in order to survive in this post-apocalyptic world (*Daywards* 337).

The Sky so Heavy

On the face of it, Zorn's *The Sky so Heavy* has much in common with a text such as Swindells' *Brother in the Land*: a boy with a younger brother is living in the country when the disaster happens. Both parents are largely absent—in Swindells' text, Danny's mother dies in the disaster, and his father soon after, but in *The Sky So Heavy*, Fin's mother is in the city, and his father leaves soon after the disaster to find Fin's stepmother. Both texts also involve a wise mentor figure whom the protagonist must ultimately leave behind in the final journey towards a new way of living. The main character falls in love with a girl who also at some stage in the narrative saves his life, and either or both characters muse how their concerns should be different from the ones these

characters have in the post-disaster world. For example, in *The Sky so Heavy* Lucy says "It's not fair, Fin. We won't get to do all the things we should . . . Like have awkward phone conversations, go to the movies, make out in cars, have fights" (154). Similarly, Danny in *Brother in the Land* thinks that Kim, the girl whom he desires, "should have been worrying about discos and boyfriends and O-levels, not fallout and deformed babies" (133). In both novels, authorities such as government and army prove to be worse than useless in looking after the general populace, and the young adult protagonist along with his girlfriend, and his younger brother, decide to travel to a distant community.

As one review puts it, *The Sky so Heavy* encourages its readers to "reflect on the desperate situation of refugees and on the relative value of all aspects of our (mostly) comfortable lives" (White and Turton, "*The Sky So Heavy* by Claire Zorn"). Whereas Branwell in *Brother in the Land* suggests that lessening of respect for life is the reason for the disaster, Fin declares that "We kind of created this for ourselves . . . We created a way of life totally dependent on outside sources: electricity, transport" (Zorn 274). The concept of inclusion versus exclusion is particularly important in *The Sky so Heavy*: Arnold, who helps Fin to survive, both physically and emotionally, has been bullied at school for being so unusual in comparison with the other students. As does Sarah in Greenwood's post-nuclear *The Broken Wheel*, Fin needs to learn that "Different isn't wrong. It's just different" (Greenwood 99). Arnold, who gives himself the name of Noll, gradually reveals more of his life to Fin, including his Christian faith and the fact that his parents are both dead; he also shares food and drink with Fin at a time when both are scarce. Noll's implicit forgiveness of Fin for the way that Fin has treated him at school stands in contrast to the self-centred attitudes of the authorities, who save one person whom they believe will be useful to them while leaving others to fend for themselves. What is notably different in Zorn's text from Swindells' novel, and from many other survivor post-disaster texts, is that the protagonist's mother is part of the negative authorities. When Fin eventually finds her, she begs Fin and his brother Max to stay with her inside the relative comfort of the enclosed city of Sydney, but she will not give sanctuary to Lucy or to Noll.

This attitude gestures towards the fear of

asylum seekers that has surfaced for some people in Australia especially since 9/11. Douglas and Graham argue that “in recent years—particularly since the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States—old, familiar anxieties about immigration have reemerged, with the focus now on asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat” (126).

This fear of the ‘Other’ who may invade territory whose current inhabitants are not feeling particularly secure about their own position is particularly highlighted in *The Sky So Heavy*. The “Children Overboard” affair, in which asylum seekers were accused of throwing their children over the side of the boat into the sea off the coast of Christmas Island in an attempt to force an Australian naval ship to take the children to Australia (see Slattery), led to a statement by the then Prime Minister John Howard: “I don’t want in Australia people who would throw their own children into the sea, I don’t think any Australian does” (quoted in Slattery 95). This casting of the asylum seeker as the demonised Other is referenced several times in *The Sky So Heavy*. Lucy, for example, suggests that people ignored the possibility of disaster and mocked those who set up alternative ways of living because it was too frightening to contemplate that the alternative ways of being may in the long term be more sustainable than the status quo. In an echo of the demonising that occurred in the Children Overboard affair, she says, “It’s like those people out in the ration line complaining about people from over the border taking their share. They have to believe that we’re greedy, ’cause the idea that we were actually left to starve is just too awful” (Zorn 275).

This idea that people seeking asylum are by definition a threat is highlighted in the sign that Fin and his fellow travellers see in the city, which states that people who “are not residents of the inner district [are . . .] a threat to YOU and YOUR FAMILY” (196). Ironically, it is revealed to Fin and Max that the biggest threat to them is the system of which their mother is an agent. One of the tasks of young adult protagonists in adolescent fiction is to separate from parents, and *The Sky So Heavy* therefore provides an unusual variation on this within the post-disaster survivor genre in that the mother is actually part of the enemy.

Conclusion

Given that Australia has had such an ambivalent relationship with nuclear energy over the years, it is perhaps surprising that post-nuclear settings feature so frequently in Australian young adult post-apocalyptic fiction. Although Australian writers have been less inclined than their British, American or German counterparts to write speculative post-nuclear fiction that positions readers to act towards preventing the disaster from becoming reality, Australian texts have nonetheless engaged closely with the idea of nuclear disaster in order to explore issues of concern in their country, in particular about treatment of Indigenous peoples and the response given to people seeking asylum in Australia.

With many thanks to Dr Alyson Miller for her assistance with the preparation of this article.



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Challenging Stereotypes: Randa Abdel-Fattah's Use of Parody in *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

Colin Haines

This article explores anti-Muslim stereotypes and strategies for combating them as presented in Randa Abdel-Fattah's first novel for young readers, *Does My Head Look Big in This?* First published in 2005, in the wake of terrorist attacks in the United States and Bali, the novel focuses on the everyday life of a second-generation Palestinian teenager who decides, as she puts it, to wear the hijab "full time" in a predominantly non-Muslim school in Australia. As will be argued here, stereotypes of Muslims and, in particular, Muslim women present not only challenges for the novel's central protagonist but also sites for her intervention. Central to this discussion is theoretical work by Judith Butler, whose notion of parody emphasizes the destabilizing effect that parody has for otherwise oppressive images and stereotypes. Rather than engage in a patient, rational, and didactic discussion with what are essentially impatient and irrational representations, *Does My Head Look Big in This?* adopts a strategy of parody—an exaggerated, often funny, redeployment of anti-Muslim stereotypes—in order to expose the ignorance wherein they originate. In this way, it will be argued, the protagonist of Abdel-Fattah's novel is not only "challenged" by anti-Muslim stereotypes, she "challenges back."

Originally published in 2005, following terrorist attacks in the United States and Bali, Randa Abdel-Fattah's first novel for young adults, *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, is concerned with the everyday life of a Muslim teenager in a predominantly non-Muslim society. Central to the novel

are issues of identity and respect, brought to the fore by the protagonist's decision to wear the hijab "full time" in an upper-middle-class private school in Melbourne, Australia. Previous scholarship on *Does My Head Look Big in This?* has tended to approach the novel in terms of postcolonial theory, particularly that of Homi K. Bhabha, Ien Ang, and Stuart

Hall. Common to studies by Jo Lampert, Sharyn Pearce, Lana Zannettino, and Karine Ancellin is a focus on cultural hybridity: the way in which the central protagonist of the novel negotiates "in between" multiple and, at times, conflicting cultural positions—her avowal of Muslim faith and heritage on the one hand, and the skepticism and prejudice she meets in predominantly Anglo-Australian society on the other. Of the studies cited here, all develop analyses in tandem with other texts and contexts. Lampert, for example, analyzes a similar young adult short story from the United States and gages the impact of 9/11 on Muslim youth in Western societies more generally. Pearce compares it with another Australian work, examining the reception and status of Islam in that country. Zannettino compares *Does My Head Look Big in This?* to novels with similar "diasporic" themes, combining both postcolonial and post-structural feminist approaches. Ancellin places it within the corpus of Muslim women's writing post-9/11. The current study, however, seeks to examine how the protagonist of *Does My Head Look Big in This* occupies not a space "in between" two conflicting cultures but how she occupies both simultaneously. In particular, I would like to focus on stereotypes, or what Randa Abdel-Fattah has called "lazy generalizations" (Abdel-Fattah and Seabrook), and the various means by which the novel engages in such depictions as a way of educating those who articulate them.

As Abdel-Fattah notes, her "primary motivation" for writing the novel was to "explore the world of the young people and how the 'war on terror' and the politics that we live in today impacts upon them." "What does it feel like," she asks, "when your Prime Minister gets up and talks about Muslims as terrorists and is lazy in his language associating entire communities and countries with terrorism? How does that impact on you as a sixteen year old?" (Abdel-Fattah and Seabrook). Typically assumed to be the product of ignorance, stereotypes are likewise assumed to be "solvable" once the people who hold them are exposed to information about the culture the stereotypes otherwise denigrate. As will be argued here, however, *Does My Head Look Big in This?* adopts a somewhat different strategy: Rather than engage in a patient, rational, and didactic discussion with what are essentially *impatient* and *irrational* representations, the novel engages in a practice of parody—an exaggerated, often funny, redeployment of stereo-

types in order to expose the ignorance wherein they originate.

"The whole idea of a stereotype," according to Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, "is to simplify. Instead of going through the problem of all of this great diversity—that it's this or maybe that—you have just one large statement: It is this" (Achebe). Inherent in Achebe's formulation of stereotype are not only issues of simplification and generalization but also of definition and power. In a stereotype, one person or group undertakes to represent another and, in so doing, defines that other in terms that are reduced, general, and seldom—if ever—terms that the other would apply to him or herself. For the person or group represented, the stereotype is no less defining; he, she, or they are left to negotiate a definition someone else has conferred. Although there are many different ways to contest one's representation by others, that contestation presumes, first of all, the ability to speak in one's own behalf and to offer an alternative representation that may counter that of the stereotype. This is not enough. Because the persistence of stereotype is not based on truth (but rather on simplicity and ease), the stereotype itself must be engaged.

For feminist and queer theorists working in the latter part of the twentieth century, "parody" has constituted one such engagement. Here, the stereotype is willfully repeated, but in such an exaggerated or hyperbolic way as to deflate or subvert the supposed "truth" the stereotype purports to convey. To borrow a phrase from Diana Fuss, parody is, in this context, "to undo by overdoing" (32). To give an example from *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, one may look at the description of Hidaya, the Islamic school that the first-person narrator, Amal Abdel-Hakim, attended prior to entering McCleans, the upper-middle-class grammar school mentioned earlier.

School from Year Seven to Year Ten was
 Hidaya—The Guidance—Islamic college.
 Where they indoctrinate students and teach
 them how to form Muslim ghettos, where they
 train with Al-Qaeda for school camp and sing
 overseas national anthems. Not.
 (Abdel-Fattah 10-11)

Here, Amal repeats Western fears of Islamic schools by reciting a number of stereotypes commonly held

about Muslims: that they are "indoctrinated," that they do not integrate, that they are terrorists, and that they are more loyal to predominantly Muslim countries than to those in which they live. Nevertheless, that she is able to list four such stereotypes in the space of three lines demonstrates how simplistic the stereotypes are. Simplifying what are already simplistic representations, Amal calls attention to the way in which stereotypes work—a refusal of knowledge in favor of simplicity. This is, in effect, to stereotype stereotypes: to undo the stereotype by overdoing it. More than this, her inclusion of the word "not" at the end of this description not only negates all of the stereotypes listed in a humorous way, it also works to counter at least one of them: far from being "un-integrated," Amal speaks a form of colloquial, teenage English, common throughout the English-speaking world.

This notion of parody (undoing a stereotype by overdoing it) is not without risk. At stake is the repetition of a stereotype, the very representation or image that one is otherwise attempting to subvert. The risk is that the ironic or satiric element will go unrecognized—or will be misrecognized—on the part of the audience so that the stereotype itself remains in full force. In other words, it is not enough simply to replay the stereotype with the intent of parodying it. Parody must be observable and unmistakable to the audience for whom the recitation is performed. This concern, that the parody may be misinterpreted, appears to inform the first American edition of *Does My Head Look Big in This?* In the Australian edition, cited in the example above, the word "not" is presented as a simple sentence (or sentence fragment), with the first letter capitalized and ending in a period. In the American edition, the same word (sentence fragment) is emphasized, being placed *all* in capital letters and followed by an exclamation mark.¹¹ It appears as though the American publisher feared misunderstanding on the part of book's readers—that Amal's negation would be overlooked and that the stereotypes she recites would be taken as truth. By emphasizing the word "not," then, the publishers appear to compensate for this fear.

In her own work on parody, feminist philosopher Judith Butler addresses this concern. "Parody in itself is not subversive," she writes,

and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions

effectively disruptive ... and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony. A typology of actions would clearly not suffice, for parodic displacement, indeed, parodic laughter, depends on a context and reception in which subversive confusions can be fostered. (Butler 139)

In other words, it is impossible to tell in advance what kinds of parodic repetitions will succeed *as* parodic and what others will fail to do so, to the degree that they may wind up upholding stereotypes rather than subverting them. To this end, Butler refuses to catalogue types of what she considers "successful parody," for each instance will depend upon its own context and audience. Nevertheless, it should be possible, as Butler claims, to examine those contexts, as well as audiences, and to determine when and how certain parodies succeed.

In Does My Head Look Big in This?, parody is deployed in a number of ways. Not only does Abdel-Fattah exaggerate anti-Muslim stereotypes, she also juxtaposes those representations with others in order to show how stereotypes single out and define "Muslims" vis-à-vis other groups. Crucial in this regard is the presence of the first-person narrator Amal, whose perceptions not only unite the narrative in a structural way but also offer a source of identification for readers. Through Amal, readers learn, for example, that the decision to wear the hijab "full time" was her own and not that of her parents or religious community. This is important, for the central stereotype with which the novel contends is the Western belief that women in Islam are "oppressed."

"Oppressed" is a word that Amal hears not only from classmates who whisper it behind her back when she begins term three at McCleans wearing a hijab (Abdel-Fattah 58). It also informs the judgment of school administrators and friends who assume that Amal has been made to wear it by her parents (35, 139). Amal parodies this assumption when, a few weeks into the term, some classmates finally don the courage to ask her about it:

Somehow, in between classes after lunch on Monday, everybody suddenly finds the guts to approach me, wanting to know what's going on with my new look.

'Did your parents force you?' Kristy asks, all wide-eyed and appalled.
'My dad told me if I don't wear it he'll marry me off to a sixty-five year old camel owner in Egypt.'
'No!' She's actually horrified.
'I was invited to the wedding,' Eileen adds.
'Really?' This is definitely a case of dropped from the cradle.
'Hey! Amal!' Tim Manne calls out. 'What's the deal with that thing on your head?'
'I've gone bald.'
'Get out!'
'I'm on the Advanced Hair Program.'
For a second his eyes flicker with shock. Then Josh punches him on the shoulder. 'Rocked!'
'Like I believed her,' Tim says, looking sheepish. (65-66)

Rather than disabuse Kristy of her guiding assumption (namely, that Amal is forced to wear the hijab by her parents), Amal repeats that assumption, exaggerating it even to the point of introducing another anti-Muslim stereotype herself, that of arranged—or, rather, forced—marriage. That this is parody is guaranteed into two ways. First, the narrative voice of Amal criticizes Kristy for her apparent naïveté: "This is definitely a case of dropped from the cradle" (65). Second, the context in which the parody is situated emphasizes that this *is* parody: Amal's exchange with Tim which immediately follows, mirrors that of Amal's with Kristy—both Tim and Kristy are shown to be easily duped. In this way, the novel educates its readers away from stereotypes. Reader identification is with Amal. Not only have they seen that the hijab was, in her case, a matter of personal conviction rather than of coercion, they now see that the stereotype equating the hijab with oppression is, at best, simplistic and naïve.

This is not to suggest, however, that parental pressure does not exist and that Muslim girls are not subject to it. Amal's friend and former classmate at Hidaya, Leila, is forced to undergo her mother's attempts to arrange her marriage at the age of sixteen. To this end, Gulchin, Leila's mother, subjects her daughter to a series of respectable male suitors looking for a bride. For her part, Leila would defer marriage and family life until after she has complet-

ed university and established a career in law. At the center of the conflict between mother and daughter are competing interpretations of Islam and women's place therein. For Gulchin, the hijab, for example, is a sign of women's modesty and sexual apartness; she cannot understand why her daughter would wear it while, at the same time, talking "*to boys at school*" (85, emphasis in original). Indeed, she sought to remove her daughter from school altogether (85). Leila's duty in Islam, according to Gulchin, is to get married. For Leila, the opposite is true: "I didn't wear the hijab," she says, "because [my mother] wanted me to. I'm going by what *I* feel is right and what *I* know about my faith. Like I'd really follow something that locked me in the house to cook and clean" (86). Matters come to a head when Leila eventually runs away from home, seeking refuge at a women's shelter in the city (323).

Although Leila's story may be seen to conform to a stereotype of "oppression of women," it is juxtaposed with another, similar story—that of Simone, one of Amal's non-Muslim friends and classmates at McCleans. Suffering from a poor body image, Simone is constantly dieting in an attempt to achieve a standard of female beauty presented in Western print and broadcast media. Not only is Simone teased by her peers for being overweight, she is, like Leila, subject to parental pressure. "Mum has her figure," she says, "even after having my sister, Liz, and me. She is constantly complaining about how I'll end up lonely and single if I'm not thinner and find myself a boyfriend. She seems to be embarrassed by me" (145). Like Leila's mother, Gulchin, Simone's mother sits her daughter down for "debriefing sessions" before Simone's sister and her sister's popular boyfriend come for visits. The point is to get Simone to diet further so that she will appear attractive to her sister's boyfriend so that he, in turn, will set her up with one of his friends—that is, find her a boyfriend of her own (145). In her attempt to conform to Western standards of beauty, Simone engages in a host of self-destructive activities such as bingeing and purging and eventually smoking to suppress her appetite (42, 221-222).

In its juxtaposition of these two stories or subplots—that of Leila and Simone—the novel does not attempt to explain or rationalize a stereotype positing Muslim women as being oppressed. What it does, however, is to point out that *women* are op-

pressed regardless of religious or cultural affiliation and that the difference between their experiences is one of degree. In this sense, the novel further educates readers away from a stereotype that singles out young Muslim women as objects of oppression while, at the same time, ignoring the similar plight of young women in Western contexts. As Leila puts it, "which way do you turn? According to my mum, the normal thing is to get married; according to everybody else out there, the normal thing is to get drunk, lose your virginity to somebody you speak to once at a party, and become 'liberated' or, like, whatever" (85).

Another way in which cultural representations are juxtaposed is through substitution—inserting the stereotype of one group in place of another. When friend and classmate Adam, for example, attempts to explain another classmate's apparent racism on the basis of her upbringing and experience, Amal refuses to accept what she considers Adam's "excuses." "[Y]ou really can't blame [Tia]," Adam says,

'It's what she hears at home. I know 'cause my dad knows her dad. They're not friends but they used to bump into each other at the golf club. That was ages ago but even then her dad would see somebody Asian or dark-skinned and he'd hail them over assuming they were a waiter or something. They really don't mix with anybody outside their circle. You're probably the first Muslim—' (138)

For Adam, Tia's racism is to be "explained." As part of her cultural background and upbringing, Tia's views should be tolerated according to Adam, at least to the degree that she cannot be expected to know any differently or better. For Amal, however, explaining racism in this way is to excuse, rather than remedy it. "Anyway," she counters,

'it goes both ways. I've got family friends who think all Anglos are drunk wife-bashers who walk around barefoot with a stubby in their hands. Or they think Anglos sit around in their thongs and Bonds singlets, rorting the dole or chucking a sickie, sculling down VBs, watching Jerry Springer and bashing their girlfriends.'

'Are you serious?'

'Yes. Dead serious. Should I make an excuse

for them? *Oh, they're allowed to think that. After all they've never really had a conversation with a sober Anglo.* If it sounds so ridiculous for your background, then why doesn't it for ours?'

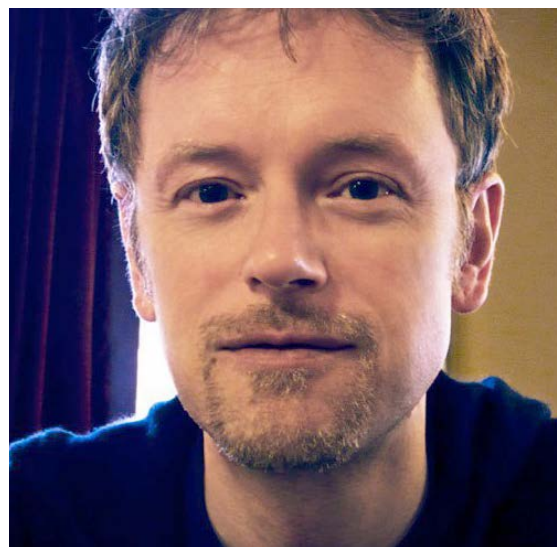
(138-139, emphasis in original)

Here, Amal substitutes one stereotype for another. In doing so, she demonstrates not only how ignorant racism is but also how *racist* the act of excusing it is. Adam does not accept the stereotype of his own community as voiced by Amal's family friends, "Are you serious?" he says (138), and yet remains willing to excuse his own community's stereotypes of others. For Amal, excusing the stereotype of her family friends would "sound ridiculous," even to her own ears. That Adam would not feel the same belies the implicit privilege he accords to his own, but not to others.

None of this is to suggest, however, that Amal is somehow independent or "outside" stereotypical thinking. Although she would insist on judging individuals rather than groups (138), she herself resorts to stereotypes. When she explains what has happened with Leila to two of her non-Muslim friends, Amal fears their reaction, thinking that they will define Leila's situation along the lines of stereotype: "*Oh typical Muslim nutters. Locking their girls up in the house*" (281, emphasis in original). Here, it is not that Amal has internalized an anti-Muslim stereotype. Rather, it is her assumption that her friends already have and that they will dismiss both her and Leila accordingly. If the question, as indicated at the outset of this study, is how the current political climate singling out Muslims impacts upon Muslim youth, then the answer may well be found here: expect rejection. Nevertheless, this expectation would likewise be to reduce, to simplify, and to stereotype the people from whom such treatment is expected. For, as Amal discovers, once she confides in Simone and Eileen, that expectation is, in this case, utterly false: "they don't tell me it's a Muslim story. They don't tell me it's a Turkish story. They understand that it is Leila's story, and I feel ashamed to think that I ever could have doubted them" (285). Here, Amal's own ignorance is exposed.

Ultimately, the problem of stereotypes is one of representation. If, as Achebe maintains, "the whole idea of a stereotype is to simplify," then a stereotype is also an attempt to define and, crucially, define

away. For, once definition is made easy, dismissal is the same. To assert information in the face of a stereotype is not necessarily to challenge it; the very appeal of the stereotype lies in its simplicity and ease. To mount an effective challenge, the stereotype must be confronted directly and all its inadequacies revealed. Parody, an exaggerated repetition of stereotype, represents one such strategy. Not only does it deflate the supposed truth of the stereotype in a humorous way, it may, as in the examples of Kristy and Amal given above, put the person who holds it to shame. None of us would like to be seen as thinking so simply. In the end, it may be that this parodic laughter—laughter with an edge—is the best means to re-educate ourselves about others, the world, and all its diversity.



ENDNOTES

¹ Abdel-Fattah, Randa. *Does My Head Look Big in This?* New York: Orchard, 2005, p. 12

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From the cover of *The house that Jack built* by Gavin Bishop

Cross-Continental Readings of Visual Narratives: An analysis of six books in the New Zealand Picture Book Collection

Penni Cotton and Nicola Daly

This article argues that, by analyzing the ways in which illustrators use certain visual codes, we can learn much about a country's history/culture and demonstrates this by analyzing the visual narratives of six picturebooks from the New Zealand Picture Book Collection (NZPBC). Emphasis is placed on how the front covers—which introduce both the stories and the new culture to young readers—are used to facilitate cultural understanding by focusing on intercultural stimuli/cultural exchanges; respecting beliefs/values; observing cultural lifestyles, sharing visual imagery and discussing the interplay between text and image.

For many years, researchers have been expressing the importance of visual narratives as facilitators of cultural understanding (see articles by, for instance, Judith Graham; Stuart Marriott; Carol Carpenter). However if picturebooks are well chosen, children may not only be able to find out about their own cultures but could also have the opportunity to learn about others. More recently, Jack Zipes suggests that “transformations in children’s literature have affected the representation and socialisation of children” (xxiii), and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer points out that picturebooks today are “distinguished by a variety of conceptual demands which comprise semiotic, material, and cultural phenomena”

(4). Dolan takes this idea further when she suggests teaching approaches for promoting intercultural understanding through carefully selected picturebooks.

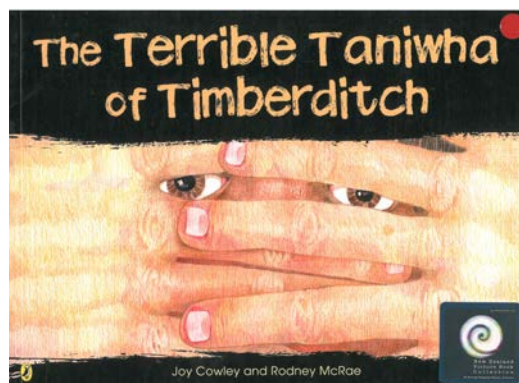
Intercultural Stimuli

Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese suggest that picturebooks allow young children opportunities to develop their understanding of others, while affirming children of diverse backgrounds. Stella Thebridge supports them and believes that children’s books are “where it all begins, where first impressions of the world outside are formed” (205). Accordingly, reading the visual narratives of carefully chosen picturebooks provides invaluable intercultural stimuli and awakens curiosity in children worldwide. The

images in picturebooks are incredibly important because, through pictures, it is often possible to indicate things that are difficult to say in words. The universal power of illustrations can help children appreciate similarities and celebrate differences within an unfamiliar culture—owing to the ways in which illustrators make use of visual codes such as position, size, perspective, frame, line, color, shape, action, movement, facial expressions, body gestures, cinematic devices, and incidental details (Cotton, *Picture Books sans Frontières* 51). In addition, because pictures offer readers a position of power, they can observe a story from different viewpoints and, through interaction with the text, are absorbed into a form of interculturality. Margarida Morgado (2006) suggests that whilst “multicultural” implies the co-existence and preservation of cultural differences within cultures, *interculturality* is applied across cultures in order to enhance and translate cultural identities through the varied cultural forms that coexist, compete, and live together.

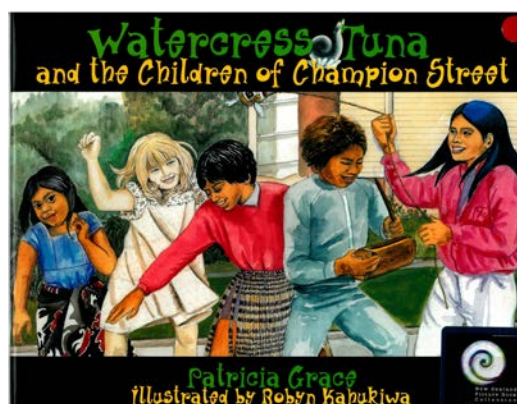
Exchange Between Cultures

The NZPBC provides an opportunity for non-New Zealanders to see another world from an intercultural and inter-continental perspective by examining those aspects of text, story and illustration which differ from their everyday lives. The notion of exchange between cultures is the focus in books such as Joy Cowley’s *The Terrible Taniwha of Timberditch* (2009) and Patricia Grace’s *Watercress Tuna and the Children of Champion Street* (1984), which give insights into the multicultural nature of New Zealand society.



The Terrible Taniwha of Timberditch (Cowley, 2009)

Monster stories from around the world are at the heart of *The Terrible Taniwha of Timberditch*. When the young female protagonist is forbidden to go down to the lake because of the taniwha (monster), she makes a trap to capture it and find out what exactly it is. In the meantime, she asks people in her multicultural community about monsters from their own cultural experiences. Rodney McRae vividly portrays the various forms of these monsters and centrally locates them, often spilling across double page spreads. His richly colored illustrations detail their skin, claws and habitat which provide ample opportunity for readers to discuss similarities and differences between monsters universally, plus associated emotions. Often the round or oval shaped monster’s eyes stare out at the reader, almost responding to the fear in the child’s large eyes on the front cover. This child’s eyes, seen in a cinematic ‘big close-up’, peep through rather podgy young fingers and suggest fear of the unknown and the unexpected. In contrast with the imaginary worlds in the other illustrations, the reality of this image is emphasized through the extremely detailed lines on each taut little finger, showing a fear with which all children can identify across continents.



Watercress Tuna and the Children of Champion Street (Grace, 1984)

The main character in the *Watercress Tuna and the Children of Champion Street* (Grace and Kahukiwa) is a tuna (eel) with a magical throat who visits children in a multicultural neighborhood (Champion Street). The diversity of the community is visually evident through the movement and positioning of the characters as the eel visits children in their homes, presenting them with a piece of clothing or a musical

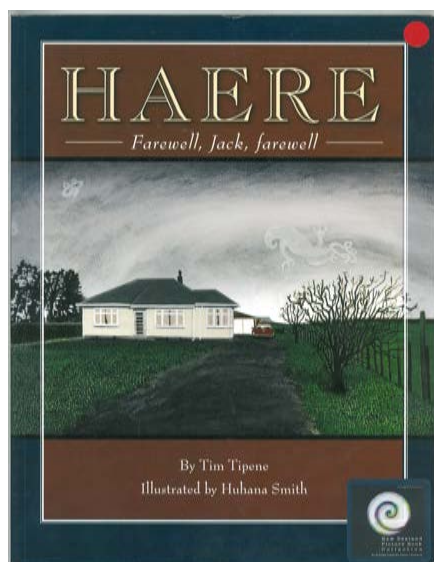
instrument linked to their heritage. As each gift is given, readers are introduced to the possibly unfamiliar names and forms of each present, both textually and visually. The eel is centrally placed on the verso page whilst each child is in a similar position on the recto, receiving their gift and dancing with it. This textual and visual reinforcement provides two opportunities for readers to discuss a range of cultural traditions and move towards intercultural awareness, thus exemplifying the pedagogical affordances of loanwords in picturebooks discussed by Daly (Windows between Worlds). The facial expressions of the children on the front cover clearly show how much they are enjoying themselves as they share their gifts. Kahukiwa's use of line, color, body gestures, and movement also shows how the children express themselves in different ways, depending on their culture; it makes it easy for young readers to see how they could perhaps add their own cultural artefact to become part of this cultural exchange.

Beliefs and Values

Tim Tipene's *Haere. Farewell, Jack, farewell* (2005) reflects traditional Maori beliefs and values surrounding the death and birth of a whanau (family) member. The story is told from the perspective of a young girl whose grandfather Koro Jack dies in the winter and whose niece is born the following spring. It provides many opportunities for readers to explore unfamiliar

beliefs and practices which surround death and birth, and is a chance for them to make comparisons with their own family or community practices. The first half of the book focuses on the winter when Koro Jack dies. The text and visuals show how family members take Koro Jack's body to the whareniui (meeting house), share stories and songs during the funeral, and finally bury him. The way that the illustrations are visually 'framed' highlights the memories that the characters have about Koro Jack. Tones of grey, black and brown predominate. Additionally the visual narrative portrays a spiritual aspect to the proceedings, with tupuna (ancestors) seen as shadowy white figures in the interior scenes before Koro Jack's body is moved to the whareniui. On the front cover, too, both the earthly and the spiritual are combined: the reality of the whareniui (meeting house) and the manaia (three fingered mythological creatures who are spiritual guardians and messengers between the earthly and the spiritual worlds) can be seen in the sky within the same static frame as the house and garden.

The visual narrative progresses in three consecutive double-page spreads, to show the coffin carrying Koro Jack to the whareniui, and each spread comprises several differently framed scenes plus a large panel of text spreading across the double pages. In the first spread, the coffin is carried in darkness and rain into the luminous white whareniui. Below the grey text panel, a second scene follows the family as they place a photograph of Koro above his coffin, shown in two framed images with framed text in between them. In the second spread, where manuhiri (visitors) are speaking inside the whareniui, two framed, almost claustrophobic scenes are divided by a beige bar and lead to a grey text panel on the verso side of the spread. The somber colors and enclosed images reinforce the solemnity of the moment. Again, manaia can be seen hovering above the heads of the manuhiri and blending into the brown walls. The third double spread depicts two framed scenes, above and below the text box, where the facial expressions of the speakers talking about the dead man's life show both the happy and sad moments. Their words are shown in memory bubbles presenting each individual's own memories of Koro Jack, whilst silhouetted scenes within the bubbles allude to events that are not mentioned in the dialogue. To the right of these images, the main character and her Nana appear to



Haere: Farewell, Jack, farewell (Tipene, 2006)

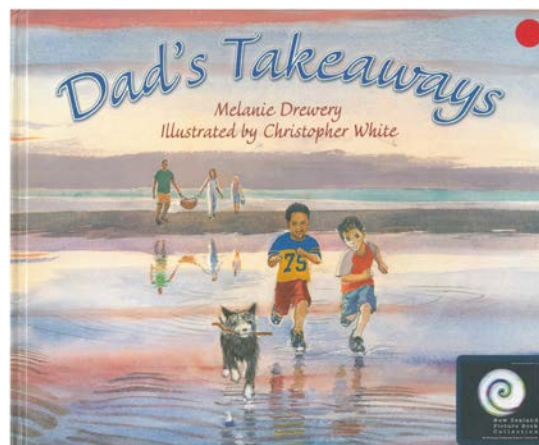
be watching Koro's life unfold, film-like, before them. Initially, in the top illustration, as the memories come back, grandchild and grandmother are looking down and crying against a dark background with slumped body gestures. In the lower scene, in which the background takes on a lighter hue, the gestures of the two characters are facing upwards and laughing in response to some of the speakers' amusing comments.

The second half of *Haere: Farewell, Jack, farewell* depicts the arrival of a new family member during New Zealand spring-time. It uses the same exterior view of the family home as the beginning of the book but this time with a sunny blue sky, lighter colored grass, bright green leaves on the trees, and active children playing outside. The interior illustrations are also much more cheerful, with more light and color in the house and characters wearing brighter colored clothes. The two double-spread illustrations show eating, giving speeches, and singing in an outdoor barn against a clear sky, tinged with the pink of a New Zealand sunset and later sparkling with stars. A warm yellow light glows from inside the barn, centrally framed in the illustration, so that we can see faces, dishes and the baby wrapped in a blanket reflecting this light. In the second spread the barn is much smaller and to the right of frame; a little reminiscent of the Christian nativity with which many children will be able to identify. This gives the impression that we the readers, as we walk away from the scene, have some understanding of the new birth. The final images, similar to that in the first half of the book, show the family at the urupa (cemetery); but this time they are taking the new baby to Koro's grave. Life has turned full circle as it does in all cultures.

Cultural Lifestyles

The NZPBC includes many books portraying everyday life situations which are familiar to children across cultures whilst, at the same time, providing opportunities for reflection on and discussion of differences in lifestyle and surroundings. Readymade food brought into the house, known as 'takeaways', is a familiar cultural concept in many countries. However in Melanie Drewery's *Dad's Takeaways* (2005) some specifically New Zealand aspects of lifestyles are represented visually as Dad takes his family to get the promised treat. Before they leave home, the wooden deck (verandah), tyre-swing hanging from a

pohutukawa tree (a distinctive New Zealand coastal tree), washing flapping in the wind and a dog chasing a ball across a large lawn depict the summer outdoor lifestyle familiar to New Zealanders. When the family drives across town, more distinctive aspects of a New Zealand seaside resort are revealed: a fish and chip shop, wooden posted power lines with seagulls, and Victorian-style wrought iron lampposts.



Dad's Takeaways (Drewery)

Chris White's very fluid use of light/bright colors, particularly on the front cover, take on an iridescent hue and, in this magical atmosphere, it is very easy to see how much pleasure the whole family is getting from their outing. The centrality of the sea, an aspect of everyday life for island-living New Zealanders, is shown by the use of a soft blue color and expressive lines in every illustration to create a shimmering movement for both the sea and the rock pools. The twist in the story comes when the family drive past all the usual places for takeaway food and Dad drives them to the beach. Here the family learn to gather kaimoana (seafood) from the shoreline including pipi (a shellfish), oysters and mussels. Later, when cooking their kaimoana on an open fire, the blue and yellow tones of the beach during the day turn pink and blue with the setting sun, visually depicting both the passage of time and the beauty of the New Zealand setting. Through focusing on the facial expressions/body gestures of the family as they go barefoot, use their toes to find pipi in the sea/rock pools, and later build an open fire an outdoor lifestyle which may not be familiar to all children is shared.

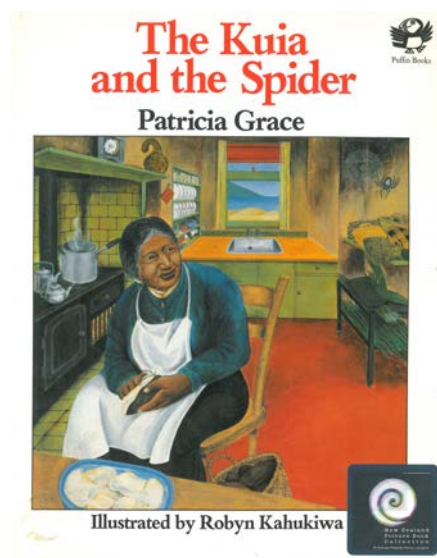
Sharing Visual Imagery

Sandra Beckett believes that “picturebooks offer a unique opportunity for a collaborative or shared reading experience” (2). This sharing of visual narratives can present all readers with believable unfamiliar cultural settings, and Gail Ellis suggests that these images are really important when learning about other cultures as well as reflecting on one’s own. She says that she “looks for stories that take place in settings other than western and urban,” such as those in the NZPBC, and address issues like citizenship and multiculturalism in order to develop intercultural awareness.

The visual imagery presented in Patricia Grace’s *The kuia and the spider* (1984) reflects a non-Western rural coastal setting which affords many opportunities for developing intercultural awareness and sharing visual imagery. In this classic New Zealand story, there are two main characters: the kuia (grandmother) and a spider who lives in her kitchen. These two have a competitive and argumentative relationship and compete to see whose weaving and whose grandchildren are best. The setting is a house across the road from the local whareniui (meeting house) in a small coastal community. The front cover underneath the title shows the inside the kuia’s house and sets the scene for most of the visual narrative. The kuia is sitting up-stage and her large figure dominates the page, but she is not looking at what she is doing

or at us. Her facial expression and body movements tell us that she is turning to look at, and maybe talk to, something/someone in the top right hand corner of her kitchen, and the title above this image tells us who it is. Even though his web in this corner is a fairly normal size, the spider himself appears to be quite large in comparison. Illustrator Robyn Kahukiwa’s visuals force us to look at the two main characters, but the incidental details that surround them in the kitchen give a good idea of how the kuia and the spider live together in this cozy setting with framed views through the window of the beach and the local whareniui. She uses soft yellows, blues, and greens in the kitchen, almost as a continuation of the beach, and expresses this theme in the yellow draining board, green shelves, green/yellow weaving, and the blue of the kuia’s shirt. Additionally, to add warmth to the scene, she uses misty grey lines as the steam puffs out of the large cooking pot on the stove and the round-shaped teapot is ready for making tea. The rustic red of the floor, which is also the color of the window blind, adds to the cozy harmony.

The relationship between the kuia and the spider is depicted through the shared visual imagery used for both of them on the front cover and throughout the visual narrative. The kuia has black hair, a blue-black skirt and a yellow scarf. This coloring is reflected in the spider who is blue-black with yellow eyes, and the pattern on his back is echoed in the tie of the kuia’s apron. What is fascinating about the illustrations is the way in which Kahukiwa uses line and muted colours to demonstrate the contrasting textures of the kuia’s weaving and the spider’s webs. Movement, too, is expressed in the use of lines and shapes as both sets of children arrive. The presence of the grandchildren (both human and spider) allows readers to visually experience the different uses for both the kuia’s and the spider’s weaving. Kahukiwa’s visual imagery details, through line, color and positioning on the page, the forms and functions of *raranga* (Maori weaving): to make bags (kits) to hold *kumara* (sweet potato), seafood, shopping etc. as well as to sit and sleep on. Her images also show how the spider’s webs are used to catch flies, to climb on and to swing from. A montage of images concludes with the kuia’s grandchildren asleep close together on their mats in various poses, including the youngest sucking her thumb. The juvenile spiders, on the other hand, spread out in different parts of their grand-



The kuia and the spider (Grace, 1984)

father's web. Alongside this, the spider (male) and the kuia (female) are seen almost like an old married couple who argue a great deal but yet have affection for each other.

Interplay between Text and Image

Mieke Desmet suggests that cultural specificity can be “the catalyst for a new and different culturally intertextual text” (122). Gavin Bishop's *The House that Jack Built* (2012) exemplifies this as it uses extracts from outside its own text taken from a well-known old English rhyme. The original rhyme, which makes reference to characters/lifestyle of sixteenth century rural England, is interwoven with images showing both the colonization of New Zealand by the *Pakeha* (Europeans) and the Maori culture that is gradually being overpowered. The phrase “house that Jack built,” often used in common parlance as a derisory term for a badly constructed building, is an appropriate metaphor for this story because Jack's house collapses during the Maori up-rising at the end of the book.

Interplay between verbal intertext and visual images, set in counterpoint, follows Jack as he tries to create a new life for himself in New Zealand, and Gavin Bishop uses a whole gamut of visual codes to express this. The front cover, for example, centrally positions a poster of the house that Jack built and places an oversized Jack outside this frame putting it up as an advertisement for his arrival in the new land. Incidental details—like the pot of glue on the ground, his positioning on the ladder, and the fact that he has to stretch his body until it moves a little uncomfortably so that his hand can fix the poster onto the brick wall—suggest that he is not really at ease here. On the poster itself are small facial images from the indigenous Maori culture looking down on Jack's house. These faces are framed by an oval border, reddish in color, and its motif is mirrored in the square frame around the poster, visually suggesting that they have power over what is happening. The house itself is centrally positioned with a vibrant red door, the color of both love and war, and looks rather out of place in an idyllic beach-like setting. Bishop uses soothing greens, cool blues, warming yellows, and curving lines to suggest that this is truly a place of calm serenity. The hard triangular shape of the house looks very invasive and out of place, and the cat on the roof announces an imported household European necessity.



The house that Jack built (Bishop, 2011)

At the opening of the story, in the first wordless double spread, there is movement everywhere to accompany Jack's arrival. The page is so busy with activity that it is difficult to know where to look. The sepia toned images are only interrupted by the color red, both of Jack's door being carried on a cart and of flames in the background. Each subsequent illustration tells the story of Jack's arrival, building a small tent house whose red door motif is visible in every subsequent illustration as he sets up his business, marries and settles in. These initial pages, showing Jack's arrival, also tell a second story of Maori society which is woven into the border and background of some of the images. Apart from the red door, the rest of the European image, including Jack, is always presented in sepia tones—not really hard, definite colors—and one has the impression that he may disappear. In addition, he is not very large on the page and is placed in a semi-subordinate position in the middle on the far left-hand side of the double spread. What dominates these two pages is a blue sea and sky with eyes scattered throughout, representing the children of *Ranginui* (the Maori sky father) and *Papatuanuku* (the Maori earth mother). Around the entire border of the spread is another text in brown-red capitals telling the Maori creation story of Papatuanuku and Ranginui. Throughout the book, a Maori perspective is represented in the border of alternate illustrations, sometimes using text and Maori motif, sometimes illustration. Also present in the central part of every illustration are the eyes in the sky. The presence of these eyes gradually declines until later in the story they are almost absent, indicating that Jack is becoming established and is finally

able to marry 'the maiden all forlorn'. The growth of the European settlement is also reflected in the size and development of 'the house that Jack built' which retains its red door, but expands to become 'Trader Jack's Store'.

As the narrative progresses, the red textual border giving the Maori perspective using myths and legend is replaced with European artefacts: hammers, candles, guns, wheels, nails, livestock, potato plants, and Maori people in European clothes. Later, the arrival of a fleet of sailing ships is followed by a gallery of European faces sporting hats and moustaches of the nineteenth century and, finally, bullocks drawing wagons. In contrast, the subsequent Maori uprising against the desecration of their land is represented by the red borders seeping into the visuals and ends with a resurgent Papatuanuku and a burnt down house that Jack built. The synergy of picture and text, often presented with several cinematic/cartoon format images to complement the words "this is the malt; this is the cat; this is the cat that killed the rat," provides an effective counterpoint for helping to explain the early European colonization of New Zealand through complex and multi-layered illustrations and intertextual references to the early English rhyme.

Conclusion

In this article, we have suggested some of the ways in which the New Zealand Picture Book Collection can be discussed in order to develop intercultural understanding and cross-continental awareness visually. Picture books (such as those in the NZBPC), as well as having the power to act as mirrors reflecting a national culture, can also provide windows into another culture for children living in a different continent. Through discussing the visual narratives of these texts, it is possible for young readers to gain a better understanding of the values and beliefs that have evolved in New Zealand, both before and after it was colonized by Europeans. Reading the NZPBC books to non-New Zealand children is an opportunity for sharing unknown visual stories and raising an awareness of the similarities and differences that exist elsewhere. By analyzing a small selection of the NZPBC books, it is possible for readers to begin to understand how diverse elements in New Zealand's cultural history have made the country what it is today. We hope, therefore, that teachers

from around the world will want to discuss the New Zealand Picture Book Collection with their pupils and contextualize cross-continental similarities and differences within an intercultural context.



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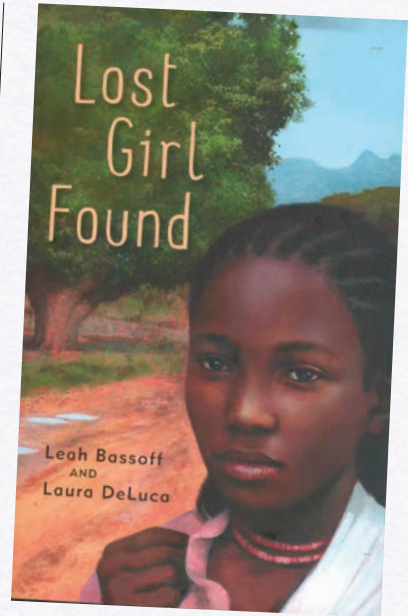
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Leah Bassoff and Laura DeLuca's *Lost Girl Found* is an incredible novel based on the combined experiences of several of Sudan's Lost Girls, narrated in the voice of young, strong-willed Poni. Poni grows up in a small village in Sudan where she frequently sneaks off to the dangerous Kinyeti River, beats up boys who show interest in her, and goes to school every day of the month, even when she has her monthly cycle. Poni's mother urges her to make a better life for herself than what marriage will bring to her; she wants Poni to pursue her education no matter what. The war comes to Southern Sudan and Poni must flee for her life. She begins a long journey to the refugee camp waiting at Kakuma; many die along the way. Once in Kakuma, Poni is given to a foster mother who routinely beats her and desires to sell her for a bride price. In the camp, Poni witnesses another girl being raped, many being beaten, and tries to help a dying pregnant woman. She finds a way to get out of the camp and travels to Nairobi where Sister Hannah, a nun who helps those who are willing to work hard and better themselves, takes her in. Poni is able to continue her schooling and eventually receives a scholarship to attend an American university. This novel is inspiring, full of emotion and heartbreak, and embodies the determined spirit of all of Sudan's Lost Girls. All of the royalties from the sale of the book go to Africare.org, a charitable organization that seeks to improve the lives of people in Africa. A definite must have novel for mature readers.

Brittany Johnson



BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Lost Girl Found
Leah Bassoff and Laura DeLuca

Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2014
193 p.
ISBN: 978-1-55498-416-9
(Novel, 15+)

First published in French in 2006 and then Spanish in 2007, *Numeralia* is an original collaboration between Mexican author, Jorge Luján, and Argentinian illustrator, Isol. These award-winning artists have put together a striking and deceptively simple book about the numbers 0 to 9. The colourful illustrations range from animals (like 2 ducklings) to concepts (like 3 bedtime kisses) to cultural or historical figures (like 6 musketeers) to flights of fancy (like an upside down chair that looks like a 4 or secret creatures who fill out the 5 fingers of a glove). The lovely end papers are reminiscent of schoolroom number work. Luján's charmingly creative text couples perfectly with Isol's wonderful drawings to encourage children to make their own connections between text and images and numbers.

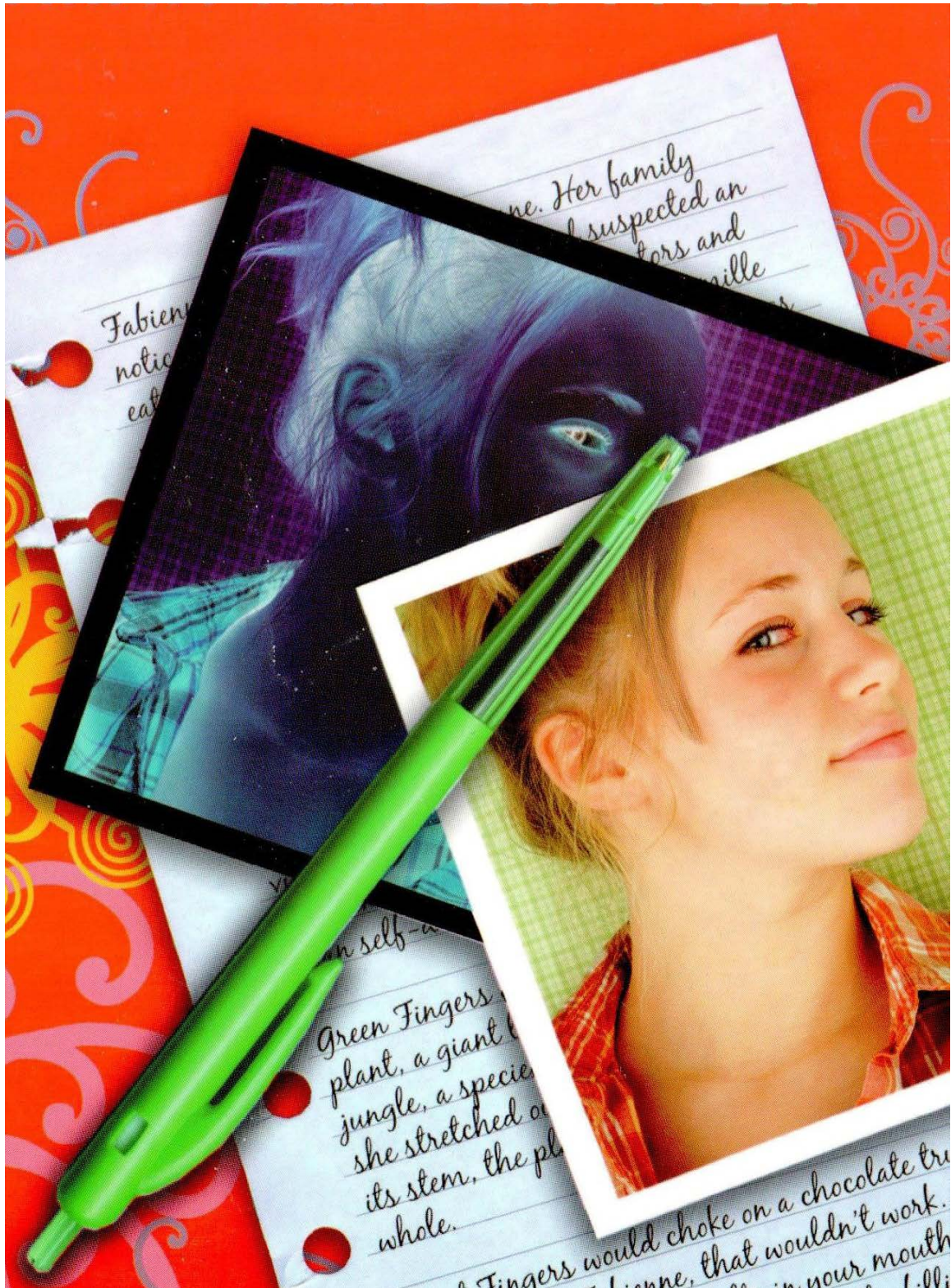
Roxanne Harde



BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Numeralia
Jorge Luján

(Illus. Isol)
(Trans. Susan Ouriou)
Toronto: Groundwood, 2014
Unp.
ISBN: 9781554984442
(Picturebook; ages 2+)



From the cover of *Hannah Why* by Marita van der Vyer

Debating Equal Representation in South African Youth Literature Written in English (2000–2013) —A Statistical Assessment

Sandra Stadler

Content features of children's literature are seldom assessed statistically, and when they are, analysts focus predominantly on the question of gender equality within literary texts of the past century. This article aims to close the following research lacunae: First, it provides a comprehensive survey of South African youth novels in English (published between 2000 and 2013), which does not exist to date. In a content analysis, a total of 247 novels were examined with regard to the categories type of fiction, space, gender, ethnicity, and social economics. Second, this article provides a statistic-based evaluation of these research categories. The major results of the evaluation are as follows: novels written in the realistic mode comprise most of the corpus (70%); nearly 60% of all realistic texts were set in urban spaces; generally, more males (46%) feature as protagonists than females (36%); black characters are represented most frequently in South African young adult novels (37%)—however, gender equality is least given for that ethnicity; in general, colored youth are least represented in English titles (6%); protagonists with a wealthy social background comprise only 13% and rank last, while youths growing up in poor conditions are most frequently chosen as protagonist in English youth literature (41%). The above numbers are compared to and contrasted with the demographic structure of twenty-first century South Africa in order to gain a deeper understanding of how young people of various backgrounds and ethnicities are actually represented in today's literature. The genre is highly heterogeneous. However, equal representation is not achieved in every category.

Introduction

Over the last decade, the calls for the display of greater equality in children's books have been growing ever louder. Worldwide, critics and journalists have mostly focused on the topic of gender equality, fiercely criticizing the portrayal of conventional gender stereotypes in most canonical children's books (and also in film and television) and the thereby continued transmission of social attitudes to the next generation that support the persistence of inequality between the sexes (cf. Chemaly; Diekman and Murnen; Taylor; Peterson and Lach; Pinsent). In their study of almost 6000 children's books published in the United States throughout the twentieth century, Janice McCabe and her colleagues found that "[c]ompared to females, males are represented nearly twice as often in titles and 1.6 times as often as central characters." The "symbolic annihilation" of the other sex has, they claim, "implications for children's understandings of gender" (McCabe et al., abstract). McCabe et al.'s findings are impressive and underline a valid and necessary global discussion; however, this extensive study of the twentieth-century US market can only be the beginning of a series of assessments of dominant topics in other national literatures, which furthermore exceed the topical gender discussion and include other significant content features such as spatial components and socio-economic backgrounds of characters, as well as their ethnicity, so that a broader picture of equal representation in children's literature is achieved. Quantitative content analyses of children's books of that kind are seldom conducted in literary studies. One of the few examples is Karen Irene Adams' dissertation, *Multicultural Representation in Children's Books*, which was based on a quantitative and qualitative content assessment in nine categories, amongst them age, gender, socio-economic status, and regional culture. Like McCabe et al.—and also Doris Gary, Emily Adler and Roger Clark, Kira Isaak Pirofski, or Bernice Pescosolido et al.—Adams focused on the examination of twentieth-century literature published in the United States. The gathering of new data of more recent material and from countries that have so far been mostly neglected by literary critics is thus essential in order to expand the scope of observed material and to obtain insights in recent developments on the book market. Therefore, this article examines whether inequality parameters continue to interweave narratives written for young South Africans in the twenty-first century.

South Africa is one of the afore-mentioned neglected areas in literary criticism and a highly interesting research area as its twenty-first century literary output for young adults has not been studied comprehensively to date. In order to establish this new field, a quantitative method was chosen as this method is believed to allow for the sort of neutral insight that is needed when addressing a new and above all contemporary research area. The approach guarantees the critic the necessary distance from his or her own social environment, the *zeitgeist*, and current events that lead to the shaping of public or personal opinions when investigating a contemporary topic. Originally situated in the social sciences, the quantitative research method (i.e., the gathering of statistical and numerical data for various research categories) can also be a helpful tool for literary critics when generating hypotheses or tracing patterns in new research fields. The findings of the quantitative research have to be understood as access points for further qualitative analyses of literary texts. Thus, it is the intention of this article to demonstrate the utility of the quantitative approach for the literary critic by visualizing the state of affairs in South African young adult literature written in English via a statistical assessment. In a country that is still troubled by poor wealth distribution, inter-racial conflicts, and spatial segregation, the quantitative method is a beneficial approach as it is a method that is most likely to be resistant to prejudice.

Assessing South Africa's English Youth Literature Statistically (2000–2013)

2.1. Research Field

The genre of contemporary South African children's and young adult fiction is underresearched, and only a few critics (for instance, Elwyn Jenkins or Judith Inggs) have published on specific topics or narratives in this field. This article's aim is to provide a first comprehensive analysis of young adult novels published in English. To date, no holistic critical or statistical assessment of the contemporary literary output exists. The study of English titles is particularly interesting as these texts fulfil multiple purposes: They are intended for readers who speak English as their first, second, and even third or fourth language. Since the potential readership is significantly higher than in any of the other official languages of South Africa, it is more likely that readers have

different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Based on the premise of a diverse readership, it is then justified to look for an alleged heterogeneity in the texts and investigate whether the output fulfils the expectations adjunct to the emblem of a lingua franca—a language that by definition brings together people with different backgrounds and languages enabling communication (cf. “lingua franca”)—and achieves equal representation for its readership with regard to various categories.

2.2. Publishing in English

English is one of eleven official languages in South Africa, with 9,6% of the population naming it as their first language (“Census 2011 Key Results” 6).² Even though it is only the fourth most abundant spoken language in South African homes after isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans, it is considered the lingua franca of the country and commonly spoken in the business world, politics, and media (“Census 2011 in Brief” 23; “The Languages of South Africa”).

With regard to the local book market, the picture is more diverse. A first glance at the assessment of the general trade sector of the book industry shows that titles in English sold best (54% of complete turnover), followed by texts in Afrikaans (45%) (Struik and le Roux vii). Hence, it could be assumed that English is the lingua franca of the South African book market as well. While this is true for adult books, it is not for children’s books (Struik and le Roux 80). Drawing on the numbers of the Annual Book Industry Survey Report 2011 once again, Struik and le Roux find that about 40% of children’s fiction is published locally (76). Despite there being more publishers for English titles, the Afrikaans market for children’s books is livelier (Struik and le Roux 68). More new narratives were published in Afrikaans (126 titles) than in English (68 titles), and also the sales figures of children’s fiction in Afrikaans (R33.8 million) exceed those of the English titles (R6.4 million) by far (Struik and le Roux 80, 82). Interestingly, but here only mentioned as a side note, every fictional text (71 titles) that was published in any of the African languages in the investigated period was a children’s book (Struik and le Roux 82).

The numbers presented in the previous paragraph show that English titles hold an intermediary position in the book market. Even though English is only the fourth most abundant spoken language in

South Africa, literary texts written in English rank second in the children’s book sector. These figures bear witness to the significant role of English titles as a medium where diversity can be promoted precisely because of its heterogeneous readership.

2.3. Objects of Research and Priority Areas

The following findings are based on a statistic which was compiled predominantly at the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown in June and July 2013. In the study, novels for young adults published between the years 2000 and 2013 were the research objects. The research categories were

- type of narrative,
- space,
- ethnicity,
- gender, and
- social economics.

The quantitative method of the statistic was chosen as its results provide an easy access to a field which so far has not been examined in its entirety. The assessment will give answers to questions regarding the dominant type of narrative within the genre, the favored place for the setting, and the representation of the genders and ethnic groups, as well as the representation of characters with different socio-economic backgrounds. The study intends to serve as an access point for further research in the area of South African youth literature.

Corpus

All in all, 247 novels for young adults have been examined. No such comprehensive assessment of these texts exists to date. The research aimed to find and include every narrative that was published from the year 2000 to the end of 2013. The corpus brings together novels listed in the South African Children’s Books in Print (SACBIP) database which is accessible on Jay Heale’s website Bookchat (<http://www.bookchat.co.za/>), texts collected at NELM, and other more recent novels that were traced by the compiler through online research. As this project intends to focus exclusively on twenty-first century publications depicting contemporary South Africa, nineteen realistic novels had to be excluded from further investigation due to their setting in any of the other Southern African countries, such as Namibia or Zimbabwe, or because they were republications of older work. Hence, 227 texts build the corpus of this

analysis. They are novels for young adults that have their setting in South Africa and were first published after the millennium. 158 of the 227 texts are realistic novels, 32 are texts with fantastical elements,³ 21 belong in the section memoirs/historical fiction/folklore, while 16 books fall under the category comics/pamphlets/books that provide guidelines/pocket books.

The findings presented in the subsequent part are the result of the content analysis of solely the realistic novels. The term “realistic novel” is understood in M.H. Abrams’ sense:

[It] is characterized as the fictional attempt to give the effect of *realism* by representing complex characters with mixed motives who are rooted in a social class, operate in a highly developed social structure, interact with many other characters, and undergo plausible and everyday modes of experience. (192)

The decision to restrict the content analysis to realistic novels was made not only because this type of narrative comprises 70% of the corpus but also to achieve an easily comprehensible assessment of the research categories. All of the research categories—space, ethnicity, gender and social economics—can be traced in realistic fiction, while classification is not as easy with other types of narrative as these follow different criteria. Pamphlets and pocket books, for instance, may have no main characters at all; fantasies make use of non-human protagonists and are mostly set in imaginary worlds; and science fiction, memoirs, and historical novels engage with a possible future or past events which would lead to complications in the setting category. For reasons of traceability and cohesion, the content analysis is hence based on the detailed examination of 158 realistic narratives.

Type of Text	Number of Texts	Percentage
Realistic novels (A)	158	70
Texts with fantastical elements, science fiction (B)	32	14
Memoirs / historical fiction/ folklore (C)	21	9
Comics/pamphlets/ books that provide guidelines/ pocket books (D)	16	7
Total Number	227	100

Table 1 South African Young Adult Novels (2000–2013)

2.5. Content Analysis

Setting

It has been stated earlier that it is not only the choice of the protagonist’s gender that is controversial in children’s literature but also the selected setting. If the critics claim that the repeated encounter of white boys as main characters influences a child’s perception of gender norms (Chemaly), it is equally valid to argue that the reencountering of certain settings—such as the city, the small town, or the farm—also influences the perception of the reader. The predominant setting in contemporary South African literature for young adults is urban space (58%). Yet, this is not as surprising as one might think, if one takes into account first that the majority of people are now actually living in urban areas—this being the case in both South Africa (62% in 2011) and the rest of the world (Ndebele)—and second that the city is understood to be the hotspot of modernity and the center for further development, the place of the future. Only one third of all books have other settings, such as rural areas (14%), schools (9%), or an unspecified place in South Africa (9%). Excluding the novels with a school setting, it is interesting to note that this dispersion actually corresponds to the distribution of the population in the country, today (Ndebele). Hence, it can be argued that authors and publishers meet their readers where they are, which is predominantly in cityscapes.⁴ The assessment of the novels has shown that urban areas are critically interrogated in the narratives so that it can be concluded that youth novels actively question the former glorification of the city as the city of gold. Rather than fostering city myths, twenty-first century output demystifies the city; strips the urban space of its glamour; and discloses it as raw, dangerous, and unsympathetic. The great majority of South African city novels for young adults are set in Cape Town (54), followed by the cluster Johannesburg/Witwatersrand/Pretoria (25), and least often in Durban (4). Smaller cities such as Port Elizabeth, Port Alfred, Bloemfontein, etc. have been included in the counting of their respective province: Western Cape (62), Northern Cape (2), Gauteng (33), Eastern Cape (13), Free State (6), KwaZulu-Natal (8), Limpopo (3), and Mpumalanga (5).⁵ Twenty-four novels are set in townships. Seven narratives engage with the highly topical movement from rural to urban space, three with urban-to-small-town movement and one with

the urban-to-rural movement of people within contemporary South Africa.

Setting	Number of Texts	Percentage
Rural	22	14
Urban	91	58
Both	16	10
South Africa (unspecified)	15	9
School setting	14	9
	158	100

Setting	Number of Texts
Urban	
Township	21
Small town	7
Rural to urban	7
Urban to rural	1
Urban to small town	3
Cape Town	53
Durban	4
Johannesburg/Witwatersrand/Pretoria	23

Setting	Number of Texts
Regions	
Western Cape	8+ 53 (CT)
Northern Cape	2
Gauteng	8+ 23 (JHB)
Eastern Cape	13
Free State	2 +4 (D)
Kwazulu Natal	8
Limpopo	3
Mpumalanga	5
Unspecified	35
Total (Regions)	164⁶

Table 2 Setting of 158 realistic novels; **Table 3** Types of Urban Settings in Realistic Novels; **Table 4** Representation of South African Regions in Youth Novels

Representation of Gender

The result of the statistical assessment of nearly 160 South African youth novels in the realistic mode published since the year 2000 is that female characters (37%) are less often chosen as main characters than are male characters (46%). This result is contrastive to “Census 2011” figures, which show that, actually, more females (51.3%) than males live in South Africa—the latter comprising only 48.7% of the headcount (“Census 2011 in Brief” 19). Significantly, 15% of all books feature both males and females as protagonists. Mixed groups appear predominantly in adventure novels, titles with a holi-

day setting (e.g., *The Summer of Toffie and Grummer*) or places where young people spend their leisure time, such as the dance studio in the Siyagruva Series. As promising as the number of novels with mixed main characters is, there is a flipside to this progressiveness and that is with regard to the treatment of the sexuality of characters in the text. Amongst the 159 novels, there are only very few texts which engage with other sexualities than heterosexuality (*The Hidden Life of Hannah Why* [2007], *No Problem Man* [Siyagruva Series] [2003], *My “Funny” Brother* [2012], and *This Book Betrays My Brother* [2013]). Of those that include a homosexual character, only one novel is integrating a lesbian voice, and this novel was published only very recently (*This Book Betrays My Brother* [2013]). The results of the overall assessment of the gender category are hence that no equal representation is achieved with regard to the distribution of the gender of the protagonists. Moreover, the existence of same-sex and transsexual love is only treated by a minuscule minority of texts. Therefore, it has to be concluded that equal representation of male and female main characters is not achieved in contemporary South African young adult titles.

Gender	Number of Representatives	Percentage
Female	58	37
Male	73	46
Novels with protagonists of both sex	26	16
Not traceable due to unavailability of book	1	1
	158	100

Table 5 Gender of Protagonists

When we investigate the collected data further and cross the gender numbers with the figures compiled in the ethnicity category, an even more detailed picture of gender representation is achieved. Significantly, the results differ for the various ethnic groups. Of the 131 novels with a single main character, only 23 texts made black females their protagonist as opposed to 32 which had black males as protagonists. The discrepancy between white male and female characters is slightly less unequal (23 to 17 texts), and female colored⁷ protagonists are even twice as often represented as male colored protagonists. Thus, only within the colored ethnicity category are female characters more often represented than male

characters. Equal representation of the genders is, however, not achieved in any of the ethnic categories.

Element	Female	Male	(Both)
Black	23	32	(3)
White	17	23	(6)
Colored	4	2	(3)
Unspecified	4	12	(1)
	48	69	(13)

Table 6 Gender and Ethnicity of Single Protagonist Novels

Ethnicity	Number of	Percentage	Representatives
Black	58		37
Colored	09		5
White	47		30
Mixed	25		16
Unspecified	19		12
	158		100

Table 7 Ethnic Background of Protagonists

Socio-economic Background	Number of Representative Texts	Percentage
Poor	64	41
Middle Class	36	23
Wealthy	21	13
Mixed Background	27	17
Unknown	10	6
	158	100

Table 8 Socio-economic Background in 158 Novel

Number of Representatives	Middle Class			
	Poor	Rich	Mixed	
Black	42	6	4	5
Colored	6	0	0	4
Mixed	2	6	6	8
White	11	15	7	9
Unknown	4	8	4	1

Table 9 Social Economics and Ethnicity in Realistic Fictions

Ethnic Background

Race has always been and still is a controversial topic in South Africa and its literature. The overall result of the analysis is that in terms of numbers, the various South African ethnicities are not represented proportionally in youth novels of the twenty-first century. However, this can only be a preliminary conclusion, as the closer examination of the numbers leads to a slightly different picture. The majority of narratives (37%) feature black protagonists, followed by 30% white protagonists, and 16% (twenty-four novels) protagonists of different ethnic backgrounds. Only 5% of all fictional texts had colored main characters; 12% remain unspecified due to unavailability during the time of close examination. Census figures are once again taken to compare the distribution of ethnic groups in literature to the actual figures of ethnic groups living in South Africa counted in 2011: “Almost eight in ten people in the country are Black Africans. Coloured and then white people follow then Indian or Asian” (“Census 2011 in Brief” 21). It goes without saying that it is not literature’s task to represent reality in exact terms; however, these figures show that the second largest population group, the colored people, is least represented in young adult literature. Furthermore, in the NELM archives, no English novel had an Indian or Asian character as its protagonist. One reason for this might be the ethnic background of the authors of South African youth literature written in English. The great majority of people belonging to the colored group, namely 75.8%, named Afrikaans as their first language not English (“Census 2011 in Brief” 27). Hence there is a greater chance of them producing youth literature in Afrikaans than in English.

Social Economics⁸

Interestingly, the spectrum of social backgrounds represented in the novels is comparatively representative of the social reality of South Africa (i.e., the majority of realistic fiction (41%) is set in poor areas). This proportion comes close to actual poverty figures in South Africa, with 47.1% of people living below the international poverty line of 2.50\$ a day (“Poverty Profile” 5).⁹ Additionally, a growing number of books are set in mixed backgrounds (17%), following a character’s fall or rise on the social ladder, for instance, or the building of friendships across the imaginary borders between social groups. Mid-

dle-class characters (23%) are almost twice as often represented as protagonists with a rich background (13%). In 2012, the official unemployment of South Africa rate was 25.1%, and the unofficial rate was as high as 36.3% (Chabane 23); 70% of the unemployed are youths between the age of 16 and 34 (Chabane 21). The national poverty level was 56.8% in June 2009, with it being more likely for a female (58.6%) to be impoverished than a male (54.9%) (“Poverty”). 39% of the population had a monthly income of less than R419 in 2009 “Executive Summary” 27). Thus, comparing the spectrum of social backgrounds dealt with in fiction to the afore-mentioned statistics of the South African government on the actual wealth distribution of the country, the realistic narratives interrogate a wide range of backgrounds; most importantly, the proportion of the respective engagement is representative of social reality. The publication of novels with various backgrounds shows that the publishers respond to today’s social structure of South African society. Publishing predominantly books which tell the stories of disadvantaged children or teenagers who grow up in poor circumstances shows that both authors and publishers have understood that this is a way to get their target audience to read.

A further point of interest is the correlation between ethnicity and socio-economic background and its representation in fictional works. The following findings are based on the analysis of 147 texts, which is the sum of those texts which were previously classified as containing main characters from poor, middle class, wealthy, and mixed social backgrounds. Black characters with a poor social background comprise 32% of this smaller corpus. Only white characters from a middle-class background are still represented in more than 10% of the titles. Most of the other nine categories are represented in 5% or less of the narratives. The colored group is best represented in the mixed economic settings.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to provide a first quantitative insight into the content features of twenty-first century South African youth literature written in English, as this methodology was found to allow a most neutral approach to a yet neglected field. The analysis produced results in five different research categories underlining the value of the quantitative method for the literary critic. The findings on South

African youth novels can serve other researchers as access points for more detailed qualitative analyses of the literary texts listed in the annotated corpus.

In his State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma declared on 13 February 2014 that the “country still faces the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment.” Thus, twenty years after the end of apartheid, South Africa continues to be in a state of transition. Such a climate naturally has its effects on the nation’s literature. The statistical analysis has shown that the young adult genre is heterogeneous, engages with up-to-date socio-economic topics, does not shy away from racial issues, and interrogates topical spatial subjects. Urbanization and life in urban areas is a major topic in contemporary literature as it is in the life of every South African. To date, equal representation of the genders is not achieved. Whether South African youth novels address issues such as the equal treatment of boys and girls will have to be the topic of another article. Hence, in terms of gender, a conservative pattern persists in the early 2000s (see also Ingg, “Transgressing Boundaries?”). It is only since the late 2000s that the genre is beginning to open up in the gender category. Now, single authors have started to question the dominance of heterosexual relationships by the inclusion of same-sex love. Also, the comparatively high number of novels with characters of mixed backgrounds and multiple ethnicities is a promising result as these novels are in themselves heterogenic and have the greatest potential to promote diversity. The above charts showed that literature for young adults is coming of age, as is the South African country. Currently, we are no longer witnessing the birth of a new nation but its rite of passage.

Endnotes

I would like to thank the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) for funding my research visit and the people at NELM, above all Andrew Martin and Crystal Warren, for their untiring efforts and support over the period.

² The other ten official languages are Afrikaans (13.5%), isiNdebele (2.1%), isiXhosa (16.0%), isiZulu (22.7%), Sepedi (9.1%), Sesotho (7.6%), Setswana (8.0%), siSwati (2.6%), Tshivenda (2.4), and Xitsonga (4.5%). 1.6% named other indigenous languages as their first language and 0.5% of the population communicates in sign language (“Census 2011 in Brief” 24).

³ This category comprises texts with supernatural, magical, clearly imaginary, and unrealistic elements. Also science fiction texts were included here although it is acknowledged that this genre is only loosely connected to the texts with fantastical elements due to science fictions affinity to “real” science and the illustration of technological possibilities in the future.

⁴ An extended discussion of valuable findings on contemporary depictions of “City Children” (Jenkins, *National Character* ch. 9) or on twentieth-century literary engagement with the environment (cf. Jenkins, *National Character* ch. 1 and 3; Jenkins, *Children of the Sun* ch. 4) in relation to the findings of this study is necessary. However, within the confined space of this article such an evaluation is not possible. For further information on the treatment of space and race in South Africa’s literature for young adults see, for instance, Inggs “Character, Culture and Identity,” “Space and Race,” and “Effacing difference?”

⁵ Doublings occurred in the setting category, with one setting belonging to different categories at the same time. The ‘township’ and the ‘urban’ category overlapped, for instance. Furthermore, some fictional spaces were named after real spaces, while others remained unspecified.

⁶ This number is higher than the number of realistic texts published (162), as some novels contain more than one setting.

⁷ In her essay from 2009, Inggs gives the following definition: “‘Coloured’ in South African English refers to anyone of a mixed-race descent. The irony of this classification was that very often so-called ‘coloureds’ could ‘pass as white’” (Notes, 113).

⁸ The research categories were termed “poor,” “middle class,” and “rich” as these classifications better mirror the social reality in twenty-first-century South Africa than the traditional four categories of social class (i.e., “upper,” “middle,” “working,” and “lower class”).

⁹ More precisely, “the proportion of the population living below \$1.25 a day was estimated to be 10.7%, while the proportion of those living below \$2.50 a day was estimated at 36.4%” (“Poverty Profile” 5).



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ANNOTATED CORPUS

Explanations: (A) Realistic novels; (B) Texts with fantastical elements, science fiction; (C) Memoirs/historical fictions/folklore; (D) Comics/pamphlets/books that provide guidelines/pocket books

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DEBATING EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH LITERATURE WRITTEN IN ENGLISH (2000–2013)—A STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT

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A lively, energetic tale from Caldecott Honor artist Peter Brown, *Mr. Tiger Goes Wild* is a celebration of what makes us unique and a lesson in daring to be different. Prim and proper in his top hat and flawlessly buttoned suit coat, Mr. Tiger lives in an equally formal town where the buildings are as monochromatic and uniform as the anthropomorphic citizens who occupy them. His expression of disgruntlement is barely contained as he patiently sips his tea and overhears children being told to not act like wild animals as they chase each other—that is, until he has a “wild” idea of his own, effectively revealed by Brown’s use of two double-page spreads depicting how Mr. Tiger achieves his quadruped stance. As Mr. Tiger grows increasingly wild in his rumpus and sheds his clothes, he runs away to the wilderness where he soon discovers a loneliness only a return to his friends can cure. Brown’s delightful illustrations and playful text allows Mr. Tiger and his readers to be pleasantly surprised by the changes Mr. Tiger comes home to as everyone gains the freedom to be themselves and finds the time to go a “little wild.”

Melissa Li Sheung Ying



BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Mr. Tiger Goes Wild
Peter Brown
 New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2013. 48 pp.
 ISBN: 9780316200639
 (Picture Book; ages 3-6)

Posthumanism, Philosophy for Children, and Anthony Browne's "Little Beauty"

Karin Murriss

Using a posthuman conceptual framework, I analyze in detail Anthony Browne's complex decisions about censorship and child protection in the process of creating the written text and the images in his picture book *Little Beauty*. Analysis of this work exposes many contradictions located in the relationship between science/art, animal/human, fantasy/reality, machine/life, and child/adult and includes Browne's choice of characters, ending of the story, and the deliberate variety of art styles throughout this work. I offer a theoretical framework for exploring the ethico-political role of the artist when producing such a picture book and a practical posthuman pedagogy that interrupts using children's literature in education as a means to give readers the right moral messages. Instead, I invite students of all ages to interrogate possibly discriminatory conceptual distinctions via philosophical enquiries.

Posthumanism focuses on the interdependence between human, animal, and machine. It redefines the meaning of *human being* previously assumed in knowledge production. For feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, posthumanism is not a concept but a navigational tool that helps us rethink the place of humans in the bio-genetic age known as anthropocene (Braidotti 5). Posthuman subjectivity is both materialist (nature-culture) and self-organizing, removing the individualized human from the center of the epistemological and ontological universe. Not to be confused with *postmodernism*, which is anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist (Braidotti), posthumanism has profound implications for pedagogy, including the role of teaching material (e.g., the books we use in class) and the moral and political role of teachers.

I put forward the claim that certain picture books can be used for an approach to moral education that enacts a posthuman theoretical framework. The particular pedagogy proposed here does not try to inculcate or moralize; instead, it disrupts traditional conceptions of children and childhood: children as 'innocent' and therefore in need of protection or children as 'concrete', 'simple thinkers' and therefore 'incapable' of exploring the conceptual complexities involved in, for example, humans' treatment of animals. Even feminist philosophers such as Miranda Fricker forget about age as a cause of epistemic injustice; Braidotti, with her radical contestation of Eurocentric universal rational subjectivity and her alternative of a posthuman situated ethics, does not mention age but only race, gender, and geography as discriminatory categories.

My key argument is this: It is the aesthetic quality of picture books such as Anthony Browne's that makes them such sophisticated educational resources for posthuman enquiries with young children, and with the right kind of pedagogy, they can help problematize the meaning of salient conceptual distinctions (e.g., nature/culture, human/non-human, child/adult, real/fantasy). The use of these binary opposites and the meaning we bring to these concepts in class is far from politically innocent as they inform our (sometimes discriminatory) attitudes and actions. These binaries are intricately connected with "constructions of the other and of otherness" (Mander et al. 3-4).

In this article, I use contradictions in Anthony Browne's work to show how his deliberate blurring of the animal/human and real/fictional binaries *at the very same time* blurs the distinction between child and adult, and how they can be interpreted as both a playful *and* a serious expression of high expectations of children as multimodal meaning-makers. Using such picture books in class makes it possible to explicitly investigate with young children the ethics of our relationships with animals and with each other across generations. I argue that it is exactly the anthropomorphism (e.g., gorillas portrayed as humans) in picture books that provokes philosophical enquiries with children that challenge humanist thinking insofar as the tension between the real and the fictional imaginatively challenges the categories we think with and live by. The narrative context has value in that the inclusion of the imaginative and the aesthetic helpfully shifts the focus from one that prioritizes a factual approach to a fictional one; such a choice simultaneously blurs the distinction between fact and fiction, truth and fantasy. As Gough argues, "the binary opposition of fact and fiction is itself a fiction—a story fashioned to rationalize the strategies used by modernist researchers in the sciences and social sciences to produce facts" (45-46).

Thinking with Children through Picture Book Art

Adults often prefer to use picture books didactically and tend to listen to children's comments *literally* (see, e.g., Chetty). Further, humanist approaches to literacy that are theoretically positioned in post-structuralism regard education as a *formation* of the child into an adult—assuming and emphasizing binary opposites (e.g., child/adult) instead of playing with and *blurring* them. For example, Critical Race

theory assumes the ontological distinction between nature and culture as fixed in its theorizing of race as a social construct (Chetty). Chetty argues that certain picture books should be avoided because their "temporal and spatial realities" have been removed (1), and thereby, such books "reaffirm the discourse of [in this case] Whiteness" in that "the story appears to exist independently of history" (12).

In contrast, I argue in this paper that it is indeed the abstractness (independence of history) of the concepts embedded in such picture books that connect with children's own ideas and interests and therefore challenges adult-centered ontology and epistemology. Enquiries *with* children about the meaning of abstract concepts make it possible for adults to hear young children's metaphorical, imaginative, and philosophical contributions to the pool of knowledge. When adults do not curtail their empiricist desire to fill children's minds with their own normative political beliefs about the world, little space is left for children's particular ways of making meaning; therefore, such educational approaches endanger genuine democratic participation. This includes poststructuralist approaches that aim to make readers aware of how texts give messages about what they should think and feel and how their subjectivity is (often subconsciously) constructed. Such educational interventions aim to deconstruct and reconstruct discourses that position readers in terms of power. However, Burbules warns, "those modes of dialogue that put the greatest emphasis on criticality and inclusivity may also be the most subtly co-opting and normalizing" (15).

How social power operates in epistemic interactions has a direct bearing on the texts we choose for teaching and the room we make as educators for children to critically explore the meaning of a text on their own terms. The philosophical approach I advocate for reading texts enables learners to interrogate texts critically at a metacognitive level: the knowledge claims and experiences of *all individual bodies* in class can become the subject of philosophical investigation, including the normativity of teachers' poststructuralist analysis of texts and the binary opposites it presupposes. What counts as knowledge and for whom can be interrogated by children themselves by drawing on their own experiences. Significantly, the role of the teacher shifts to that of co-enquirer rather than knowledge bearer or transmitter.

A more egalitarian and democratic space for meaning-making is opened up when carefully selected contemporary picture books are used for imaginative, intergenerational philosophical dialogues and children are listened to on a more equal footing. What children are able to do by 'nature' and how they 'progress' or 'mature', through 'cultural' interventions is problematized (also by the children themselves) in an approach to teaching and learning called Philosophy for Children (P4C). The P4C community of enquiry pedagogy positions young children as highly imaginative, abstract thinkers who demand to be listened to when pooling ideas about, for example, the 'deep' meaning of a story as explained further below. But I first explore particularly suitable texts for such philosophical work. These are picture books with ambiguous and unpredictable meanings. Reading such "miniature ecosystem[s]" (Lewis 48, 54) involves reasoned, emotional and embodied engagement with the universal abstract concepts embedded in the stories. In this respect, Anthony Browne's work is particularly suited for posthumanist moral education.

Anthony Browne

Anthony Browne's picture books are popular texts not only for literacy but also for P4C. His work are characterized by a deliberate blurring of many binaries, such as working class/upper class, animal/human, young/adult/, real/fantasy. In his autobiography, *Playing the Shape Game* (written with the help of his son, Joe Browne), Browne writes movingly about the life events that have inspired his artwork, his aesthetic judgments, and other decisions about the complex relationship between fantasy and reality. What struck me in particular were his ideas about his picture book *Little Beauty*: his choice of characters, ending of the story, and the deliberate variety of art styles which mobilize profound contradictions about how the child as reader is positioned.

Browne reflects on some of his moral dilemmas when creating *Little Beauty*. I propose that

these reflections make a rich starting point to think critically about how we conceptualize the difference between moralization and moral education. In the former, educators feel the need to give the right answers to children and instill the right kind of behavior which they themselves value to be morally good. However, such a *prescriptive* approach to moral dilemmas does not educate. Telling children what the moral of a story is or making sure they 'internalize' the 'right' messages (e.g., always be honest) does not constitute morally right actions in context (e.g., telling the truth in a particular situation). As Straughan puts it, "obedience to an authority is, strictly speaking, irrelevant to the business of ethical decision-making" (74).

Such a theoretical framework for moral education creates a context for discussing with, for example, student teachers about how a picture book like *Little Beauty* offers a posthuman ethics perspective by deliberately problematizing the binary opposites provoked in picture-book art through the words, the visual images (Serafini), and the interdependent meaning. I propose that such an approach to moral education is particularly powerful in an enquiry- and research-based context like P4C, where students of all ages are allowed to ask their own questions about the narrative. This could include, for example, the 'real' story of Koko on which the fictional story *Little Beauty* is based. In turn, the mixture of fiction and non-fiction can generate enquiries about problematic binaries such as fantasy/reality, truth/fiction, female/male, supported by the fact that it is unclear whether Anthony Browne himself remembers the 'real' story (as explored below).

Little Beauty

Little Beauty is a powerfully illustrated story about a gorilla who has almost everything except a friend. He is sad and lonely. He communicates to his zoo keepers in sign language that he would like a friend, and they decide to give him a kitten called Little Beauty. His keepers remind him not to eat Little Beauty, but gorilla loves her (see figure 1).

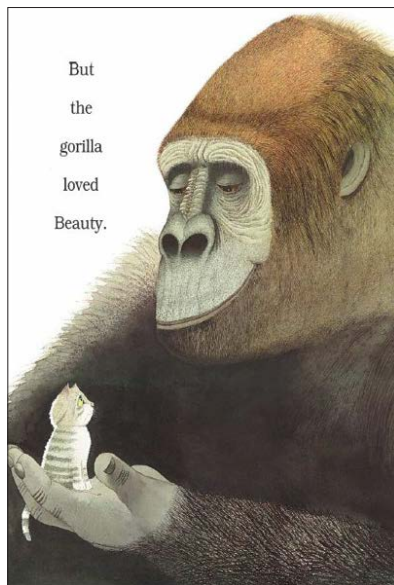


Figure 1 Gorilla and Little Beauty become good friends

They eat, sleep and have fun together. They become inseparable friends—they even go to the toilet together! Until one day the gorilla gets extremely upset watching the film *King Kong*. He gets so angry that he destroys the set. The keepers rush in and threaten to remove Little Beauty, but by using sign language, Little Beauty states that she has done it and everyone laughs. In good fairy-tale tradition, Little Beauty and gorilla live happily ever after.

The story is reminiscent of the fairy-tale "Beauty and the Beast." The allusion is substantiated by the recurrent appearance of roses (Browne 224). Much information that helps readers make sense of the story is omitted in words and included only in the drawings. In a profound sense *Little Beauty* cannot be fully summarized only in words because of the 'gap' between its words and pictures. Browne explains that art is a form of communication and that his pictures "tell as much of the story, and communicate things that the words do not...I like to include differences and gaps...imagination" (Browne 45).

For example, Browne's book *King Kong* was inspired by the film of the same name. In *Little Beauty* this is the same film that made the gorilla so angry, yet there is nothing in the words to explain why he gets so angry (see figure 2). Readers have to figure that out for themselves.

His subtle use of different semiotic sign systems—written, visual and graphic design (Serafini)—makes

Browne's work a "cognitive stretch" (Lewis xiii), as well as emotionally engaging. When reading this story in a South African *Nal'ibali* after school reading club,¹ the 6 and 7 year olds were deeply engrossed despite the fact that the written text does not mention the *King Kong* film. Some of the children knew exactly why he was so angry: King Kong's death on television must have outraged him. My postgraduate students working with this picture book in their own foundation phase classes confirm my own findings.² In *Little Beauty*, different ontologies provoke rich imaginative opportunities for meaning-making: the Gorilla on the television and the gorilla in the picture book merge with the 'real' stories about a gorilla (called Koko in the real story and is a female, not male) who had a pet kitten.

The 'Real' Story

Browne admits that *Little Beauty* is based on two real stories he had heard, misremembered, and combined in his mind (*Playing the Shape Game* 219). In both versions, a gorilla called Koko is the main character. Koko lived in a zoo in California, and in 1994, she was given a kitten which she named *All Ball* (because she had no proper tail).³ To relieve boredom, she was taught sign language by her keepers; this language she used not only to communicate her feelings, but also to answer questions (www.koko.org). Moreover, she invented new concepts, for example, "animal

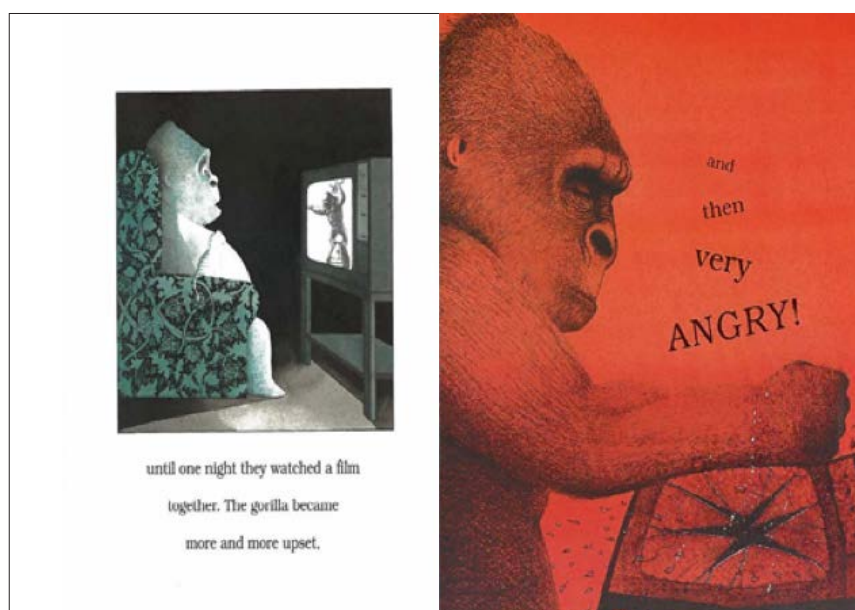


Figure 2 Upset about King Kong's death scene, Gorilla smashes the television set

person" for "gorilla" (Browne, *Playing the Shape Game* 218). One day she destroyed the washbasin in her cage, and when her keeper asked her what had happened, she signed "The keeper did it." Browne speculates that Koko could in this instance have been lying, but it is also possible that she was telling a joke as it was so obvious that the keeper had not done it (219). Both are equally fascinating scenarios. In the second story about Koko, the gorilla was given a kitten as a pet to see whether she could care for and look after another animal. On the whole, Koko looked after the kitten well until one day she escaped from the cage and was killed on a road nearby (219). Apparently, Koko grieved for many days; when she was signed that All Ball had gone, Koko signed "Bad, sad, bad" and "Frown, cry, frown, sad." The keeper also reported later hearing Koko making a sound similar to human weeping.⁴

Although Browne claims that *Little Beauty* is an amalgamation of these two stories, in an interview with Kate Evans, he remembers a different ending to the same story: Koko accidentally crushed Beauty to death when she rolled over one night in her sleep (*Playing the Shape Game* 181). Considering the two different *unhappy* real endings, it is interesting Browne chose a fictional *happy* ending that involves the kitten lying.

Dishonest Story Characters—the Wrong Moral Message?

Browne admits that the way *Little Beauty* solves the problem in his story (by lying and taking the blame for the damage) has severely troubled him (*Playing the Shape Game* 219). He reports that some adults are disappointed in him in that (according to them) *Little Beauty* gives the "wrong message"; they accuse him of a casual attitude towards lying. After all, his critics say, Gorilla should take responsibility for his own destructive aggression. Browne responds,

Just because this particular gorilla lied (or perhaps told a joke) on this particular occasion doesn't mean it is acceptable to lie under any circumstances. I know that most children are astute enough to realize this, but a lot of people were uneasy about the perceived ambiguity of the message. (219)

His response is interesting on two counts: First, his choice of *Little Beauty's* happy ending when the two

real stories have unhappy endings (leaving aside which version is factually true). Second, as an artist he says he made *Little Beauty* admit to smashing the television as a joke, to make the book "more about friendship than dishonesty." However, when exploring the picture book in the reading club mentioned earlier, I found that the children immediately picked up that the kitten was lying. Similarly, in some of my postgraduate students' work, the book was used for P4C sessions and with similar results. In P4C, it is easier to hear what children themselves think because their questions are a key reference point for the lessons.

The community of enquiry pedagogy

It was American Pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) who was the first to fuse together the terms 'community' and 'enquiry' in the domain of scientific enquiry, but it was philosopher Matthew Lipman who introduced it as the pedagogy of P4C some fifty years ago. The community of enquiry pedagogy can be used in all subject areas, with all age groups, and in informal education. As explained by Haynes and Murriss, participants sit together in a way that enables each of them to hear and see each other (50-53). Ground rules for working together are agreed upon and can be modified as the community develops. Rules include all the obvious prerequisites for ordered and fair deliberation: listen carefully, avoid interrupting or dominating, respect one another, and do not ridicule. This aspect of the community of enquiry makes it easier for children to say what they really believe, as they do not seem to feel judged by the others. Disagreement is normalized; it is perfectly alright—even encouraged—to disagree with each other. The teacher as facilitator gives space for the children to ask open-ended questions—often of a conceptual nature. These abstract concepts are explicit or implicit in the story's written text and pictures.

With only minor provocation, *Little Beauty* (especially when using the 'real' story of Koko) prompts questions about conceptual distinctions such as real life/made-up stories, lying/truth-telling, and in particular human/animal. The conceptual play is provoked by images that deliberately blur the latter distinction. For example, the zoo keepers seem to have an exaggerated amount of body hair whilst in charge of a gorilla who watches television in a comfortable armchair with a cup of tea and a hamburger, a standard lamp, and William Morris wall paper. Without

sentimentalizing children's capabilities, young children can engage in such conceptual play (Haynes and Murriss) because the P4C process of bringing meaning to concepts is not based on age but is related to experience—the child/adult distinction is problematized.

So far, Browne's decisions and comments seem to suggest that he supports a view of young children not as innocent but as able and competent. However, his autobiography suggests fascinating contradictions. It is in particular *because* of these contradictions that his work is so useful for teaching posthuman ethics in the (university) classroom. Involving students in open-ended philosophical enquiries focusing on these contradictions makes it possible to not just *use* core binary categories for a particular political or pedagogical purpose (as, e.g., in critical race theory, critical literacy, or social constructivism³) but also problematize and blur them.

Some useful contradictions

Browne's choice of art styles in *Little Beauty* deliberately disobeys some rules of his profession (*Playing the Shape Game* 220): they vary from very detailed pencil drawings to rough sketches, large splodges of water color, and aggressive charcoal drawings. He explains that his choice depends on the need to express certain moods. For example, "child-like" rough sketches are often the best way of communicating the emotions of the characters, as well as illustrating the movement in the book. The effect is heightened when the background is very detailed wallpaper (221).



Figure 3 The kitten's tail points at the Fall of Icarus, who drowned in the sea, because his wings got burned

Browne's contradictory stance towards children is most obvious in one particular two-page spread. It shows Gorilla and Little Beauty swinging from a lamp (Figure 3). He explains that children should be warned not to swing from lamps—hence his (playful?) decision to use a particular non-realistic art-style, as if to say "you should not do this in real life yourself!" (224), and his decision to incorporate a "hidden warning": The kitten's tail points at the Fall of Icarus, who drowned in the sea, because his wings got burned (lamps are hot!).

On the one hand, the author believes in the need to warn children that this is just a story and to give the right moral message that they should not swing from lamps; on the other hand, the implied young reader is believed to be so sophisticated that s/he can pick up these very complex semiotic cues. In my experience of working with this book in the context of P4C, the learners have never picked up on any of these moralizing messages. But their astute and insightful ideas about other parts of the story demonstrate their ability to appreciate complex conceptual ideas and moral dilemmas. Here are some examples:

- How did the cat explain herself?
- What reasons did Beauty give for breaking the television?
- Who could have made the gorilla and kitten stay together in the same house and do every thing together?
- Why choose a kitten since it could easily break?
- What is happily ever after?
- How could life be if there were no gorillas?
- How can they do everything together?

In P4C, they are listened to and guided by a teacher as a facilitator⁶ who knows how children can use each other's ideas as building blocks by asking open-ended and thought-provoking conceptual questions such as "In what way did the cats explain herself, and is that different from how a human would do that?," "Could humans and non-human animals such as cats and gorillas do 'everything together' and what would that be like?," and "Why do you think the artist changed the gender of the animals in this story?" One of my postgraduate students asked her Grade 2 class to draw a zoo, but for humans.⁷ They first explored the categories they would use for putting groups of people in certain cages.

Conclusion

For students, Anthony Browne's artwork can provoke profound enquiries about the meaning of binaries such as science/art, nature/culture, animal/human, real/fantasy, and boy/girl. His humorous and playful work is highly suitable for this philosophical work as it contains fascinating contradictions. It is because of these contradictions in particular that his work is so useful for a posthuman approach to moral education. The key idea in this article is the provocative notion that thinking *with* and being *alongside* children pedagogically can disrupt adults' destructive binary thinking (including adult/child) and that a new posthuman ethics is possible by enabling a more open, 'childlike' space for adults and children where boundaries between them are blurred. Carefully selected picture books support this philosophical work of explicitly blurring distinctions between binary opposites, thereby opening up fresh emancipatory ways of thinking that cannot be prescribed or predicted.

¹ <http://nalibali.org/>

² In South Africa, the foundation phase includes Grade R-Grade (approximately 5-9 year olds).

³ In reality, Koko was female, not male. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koko_%28gorilla%29 accessed 5 September 2012

⁴ Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koko_%28gorilla%29 accessed 5 September 2012

⁵ For example, social constructivism assumes that there is an ontological distinction between nature and culture (ZPD), which has profound implications for epistemology (mediating school knowledge) and ethics (the adult as expert doing the mediation).

⁶ Importantly, not as 'mediator', which assumes a socio-constructivist theoretical framework I do not subscribe to. See footnote 12.

⁷ Thanks to Robyn Thompson for this example from practice.



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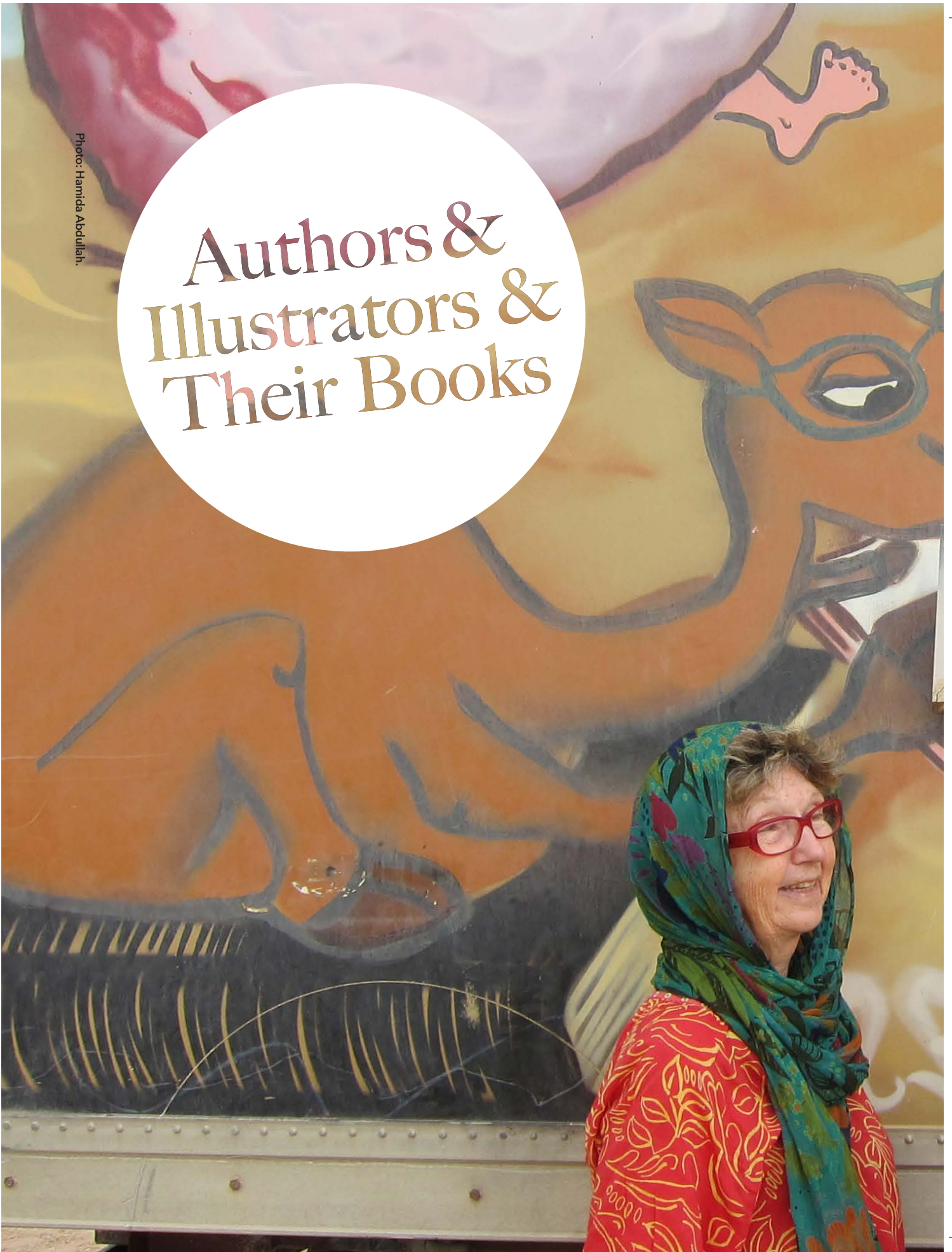
Matthew Lipman in the US, she helped conceptualise and implement the teacher education of P4C in the UK (www.sapere.org.uk) before moving to South Africa in 2009. She has published many professional articles and academic papers (see: <https://uct.academia.edu/KarinMurriss>) as well as books *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books* (1992), and (with Joanna Haynes) *Storywise: Thinking through Stories* (2002), *Picturebooks, Pedagogy and Philosophy* (2012; Routledge Research in Education Series). She is currently co-editing the *Routledge International Handbook on Philosophy for Children*, and her book *The Posthuman Child: Educational Transformation through Philosophy with Picturebooks* (Contesting Early Childhood Series) will be published by Routledge in 2016.

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Photo: Hamida Abdullah.

Authors & Illustrators & Their Books



A Book Like Rain in the Desert

Monica Zak



AS A SWEDISH WRITER of youth novels and children's books I have visited many schools in Sweden and in other countries, but only once have I started crying in a classroom. It was on a sweltering day in a small school in the Sahara desert. The children who made me cry were all refugee children living in the huge Sahrawi refugee camps in the Algerian part of Sahara.

My tears started trickling down my cheeks when I saw the normally disciplined school children standing up, waving their arms, shouting.

On the blackboard the teacher had written. Language: Arabic. Subject: Hadara.

The teacher was reading aloud from my book *The Boy who Lived with Ostriches* in Arabic. She now and then stopped to ask a question that made the children stand up and frantically wave their arms.

They all wanted to answer the question.

And they all looked so happy.

Had I really written a book that was the cause of such joy? It was now my tears started running.

The story of the book the teacher was reading is the strangest and most wonderful story I have ever come across.

I had heard it told by storytellers when I was travelling through the Sahara desert as a reporter. Having visited the tents of nomad families in the liberated part of Western Sahara and also many families in the huge camps with refugees from Western Sahara in Algeria I had learnt that the proper way of greeting a visitor is with three glasses of tea and a good story. On two occasions I heard a story about a small boy who was lost in a sandstorm and was adopted by ostriches. He grew up as part

of the flock and was the favorite son of the ostrich couple. At the age of 12 he was captured and returned to his human family. The storytellers I heard telling the story of the Ostrich Boy finished by saying: "His name was Hadara. This is a true story."

Of course I did not believe it was a true story, but it was a good one so I published it in the magazine *Globen* as an example of storytelling amongst the Sahrawi in the desert. In the same magazine I also had several articles about the life of the children in the refugee camps. When the magazine was published I was invited to the Stockholm office of the representatives of Polisario, the organization of the Sahrawi refugees. They thanked me for writing about their sad plight, about them living in refugee camps in the most inhospitable and hot part of the Algerian desert since 1975 when their country was occupied by Morocco. However, they said, they were especially grateful that I had written about Hadara.

"He is dead now", one of them said. "Was it his son that told you the story?"

"What?" I said flabbergasted. "Is it a true story?"

"Yes", the two men said with conviction. "Didn't you see the refugee kids dancing the ostrich dance? When Hadara returned to live with human beings he taught everyone to dance the ostrich dance because ostriches always dance when they are happy."

Having said that, the two men started dancing Hadara's ostrich dance, flapping their arms and craning their necks among the tables and computers of their office.

Afterwards I could not forget the two dancing men who had claimed that the

Hadara story was a true one. They had tried so hard to convince me that a small West Saharan Bedouin boy had grown up with animals like Tarzan, that he had been the Mowgli of the desert.

A few years later I decided to return to the Algerian desert to try to find out if there was a grain of truth in the story. The problem was that I did not know where to look; the Sahara Desert is rather big after all. I flew to the desert town of Tindouf as I had decided to start looking for the story among the West Saharan refugees. The two dancing men had claimed that Hadara had a son who might be one of refugees; they did not know his name, however. I arrived at the camps and started inquiring. The problem was that there were so many refugees to ask, since, at that time, there were an estimated 160 000 Sahrawis living in four huge desert camps.

But I was lucky, very lucky.

A doctor at the hospital said he had

treated a child that had been eating stones and pieces of glass. The child survived but afterwards he asked the child why on earth had she eaten stones and glass and she had answered;

“Because my grandfather always did. He had learnt that from the ostriches”.

“What was your grandfather’s name?”

“His name was Hadara”.

Thanks to the doctor’s story I could find Hadara’s son, Ahmed Hadara. He was one of the refugees living in one of the camps.

I gave him the magazine where I had published a very short version of the story of his father. The article was in Swedish but there was a drawing of a naked boy running in the middle of a flock of ostriches. When Ahmed Hadara saw the drawing he started crying and said that his father had looked just like that. He also told me that his father had hated foreigners. Many had been looking for him, but he had always



I spent several days in his tent listening to Ahmed Hadara’s extraordinary story of his father. Photo: Kim Naylor.

managed to run away when they came.

“I have told the story of my father at least 2000 times to my people, but never to a foreigner,” he said, “but because you gave me the drawing of my father I will tell you what I know.”

I spent several days in his tent listening to Ahmed Hadara’s extraordinary story of his father. Furthermore, I also found and interviewed other people who had known Hadara. Based on all those stories, my own experiences from the desert and information on ostriches from an ostrich farmer in Sweden I wrote the book *Pojken som levde med strutsar* [*The Boy Who Lived with Ostriches*].

The book was published in Sweden in 2001 and was an immediate success, and was subsequently translated into Spanish and also published in French and Arabic in Algeria. As I wanted the refugee children

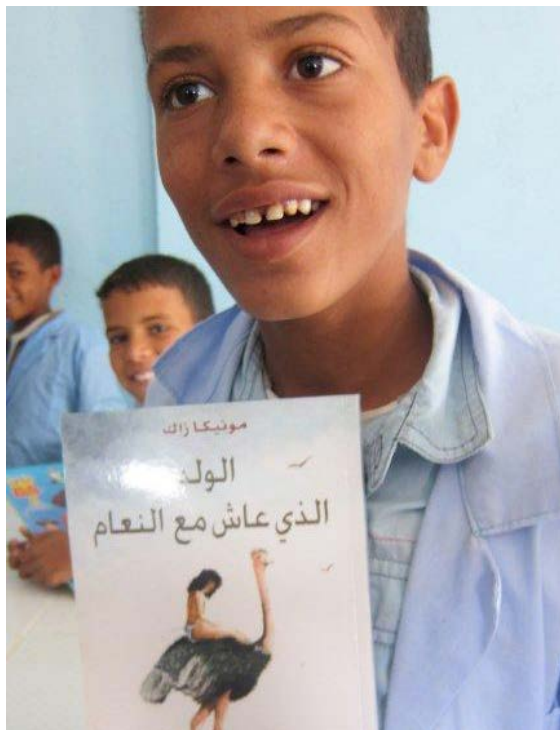
to have the book I was given a small donation from the Miljöpartiet, the Green Party of Sweden. With the money I returned to Algeria. When in Algiers I bought 200 copies of the book in Arabic from the Algerian publisher and brought the books with me to the camps. On the very first day among the Sahrawi refugees I gave the book to one of teachers in a school. She immediately started reading it aloud and I saw the children’s extraordinary reaction.

When I asked the teachers why the children were so happy to hear her reading the book she said: “Because they have heard the story of Hadara in the evenings in their tents. And because it is in Arabic, their language. And because it is a book about the desert. And because it is a book about them...”

The first person I wanted to give the book to was, of course, Hadara’s own son who had told me everything he knew about his father. Unfortunately he was not in the camps. He was now a guard on the border of the occupied Western Sahara. We left the camps, in a Land Rover, and we drove westward through the desert. It was a beautiful and clear day with shimmering mirages. Late in the afternoon we found the tent where Hadara Junior lived with his wife, his daughters and a lot of goats. When I handed him a box full of books about his father he opened it and kissed every copy. He said he was proud and happy that the story of his father was published in a book, so that people beyond the desert would know about him.

Hadara’s son, as well as every teacher I met and the Minister of Education (since 1976 a shadow government has existed in the camps) expressed the same wish: “We

Photo: Monica Zak



want many copies this book in Arabic. Everyone here wants to read it”, they said. “Children, adults, old people. It is the first book that reflects our identity.” The refugee children claimed that even the camels wanted to read it.

When the members of the Ministry of Education heard that the book on Hadara was widely read in Swedish schools they said: “Why don’t you write a handbook so our teachers can learn and be inspired by the Swedish teachers?”

I returned to Sweden and approached BiS (“Bibliotek i Samhälle” [“Libraries in Society”]), a small but energetic organization of Swedish librarians. They accepted the project and immediately started fundraising in many ingenious ways. I wrote a handbook that was translated into Arabic showing how Swedish children and teachers had worked with the book in the Swedish schools. It was a handbook full of poetry, stories, drawings and tips from the teachers. One thousand copies of the handbook was printed in Sweden and shipped to the camps. BiS financed the printing in Algiers of an additional 5000 copies in the book on Hadara. BIS also bought 1000 hardback copies of the book which had been printed in Sweden, copies that were then shipped from Sweden in a container and smuggled into the occupied Western Sahara.

In 2011 I returned to Algeria to organize the transport of the 5000 copies of the Hadara book from Algiers to the camps. The majority of the books were handed over to the Ministry of Education. The 32 schools in the camps have school libraries but very few books and hardly any in Arabic. According to the Ministry every



Photo: Monica Zak

class in the camp must spend one hour in the school library reading each week. Now they had a book in Arabic, the language they wanted to read, and they needed to practice in order to continue their studies outside the camps.

Some of the books about the Ostrich Boy were also handed over to Bubisher, a Spanish solidarity organization comprising librarians, teachers and writers. Bubisher has financed the building of public libraries in the camps and has currently three book buses, bringing books to the schools. Up until then Bubisher had only brought books in Spanish to the refugee children, a language the children don’t read nor understand very well.

I saw the desire to read in Arabic when I spent a day in one of book buses visiting schools in the camp of Smara. We went to a school library where pupils aged about 15 were having their weekly hour with books and reading. All the books in the library were in Spanish and the kids I could see had chosen to read comics instead of books. When the librarian of the book bus entered the library holding the Hadara book in her hand Mohammed, aged 15, shouted: “Look. It is in Arabic!”

He wanted to read it.

All the pupils wanted to read it. The teacher in charge of the library also got a copy of the handbook from Sweden. The kids gathered around the book to read the poems and look at the drawings made by Swedish school kids. But what captured their interest most was a photo of three blonde Swedish girls sitting on a heap of snow reading the same book (the Swedish version) they now had in their library. They had never seen anything so exotic.

They said: “We hope they will be librarians when they grow up and come to see us. We want them to come here, but tell them we want them to bring some snow.”

When I came back to Sweden I received mail from Hamida Abdulla, the administrator of the public library in Smara (one of the refugee camps):

The book *The Boy who Lived with Ostriches* is like rain in the desert. It is our first best seller. Now we have many more visitors to the library. Everyone wants to read it, because it is about us, but also because it is in Arabic.

Seeing this the Spanish organization Bubisher has decided that 20 % of the books they will donate and distribute to the schools in the future will be in Arabic.

The Swedish organization BiS has also bought Swedish children’s picture books translated into Arabic and published by editorial Dar Al-Muna in Sweden and has had them shipped to the camps. Thanks to that the refugee children now are familiar with Astrid Lindgren, Sven Nordqvist,

Ulf Stark and other famous Swedish writers.

But the best seller is still *The Boy who Lived with Ostriches*.

I realized this when I returned to the camps to write a second book on Hadara. At the age of 15 he returned to the desert and to his ostrich family and did not come back to his human family until 7 years later. Researching for this new book I had to ask why the book on Hadara was so popular. The answer was:

Because Hadara is our hero. He lived a very hard life in the desert with the animals but he never gave up. We are like him. Our country was occupied 40 years ago by Morocco and ever since then we have live in refugee camps in the desert. Our life is also hard. But we never give up, we will continue our struggle until we can return to a free Western Sahara.

Among the refugees the art of storytelling is still living. I am interested in oral culture and have collected ghost stories during my travels around the world and have published three collections in Sweden. One, *Den sjungande dödsfallen* [*The Singing Skull*] has now been translated into Arabic and has been published in Algeria. The organization of Swedish librarians, BiS, has bought copies of the book which now have reached the public libraries, and the book buses in the refugee camps. The book *Kitab el Aschbah* comprises stories from the Sahara desert as well as from Sweden, Honduras, El Salvador, Tonga in the Pacific, England and Greenland.

The first stories in the book I heard

while visiting a boarding school for older refugee children in the camps. I asked the pupils what they did in the evenings. They said they watched videos.

“But most of the time there is no electricity and the video does not work,” one of the boys said.

“What do you do when the video does not work?”

“No problem. We have abdelai.

I did not understand the word abdelai so I asked what it was. They all pointed at one of the boys. He was Abdelai, the storyteller of the school. He told stories every evening when there was no electricity.

I asked Abdelai to sit down with me and one of the teachers who was fluent in Spanish and who promised to be my interpreter. I wanted to hear one of Abdelai’s stories.

When I asked him to tell me a story

he immediately told me 12 extremely good ghost stories. Seven of them are in the book that is now published in Arabic and sent to the camps. The same book has been read by many children and teenagers in Sweden. During my most recent visit to a school in my capacity as an author, yesterday as a matter of fact, I met with a 14 year old boy who said that he normally does not like reading books, but that he had read this book 10 times.

Now the children in the camps can read Abdelai’s stories and others that belong to the oral culture of the desert, as well as those from other countries. My hope is that the reading of this book will inspire children and adult to tell more stories in the camps and to organize a Story Telling Festival in the desert.

Monica Zak



Photo: Monica Zak

The Children's Literature of the Arab countries: The Question of Language

By Hala Bizri

Twenty-two countries, as many dialects, some minority languages, and one common, standardized language: the Arab world is far from linguistically uniform. Each country has its own linguistic issues tied to its history as well as its cultural and identity choices. These issues are also reflected in the field of children's literature, which raises the question "which language(s) should be used to address children in such a particular context?" Hala Bizri, librarian and researcher, draws up a linguistic panorama of the Arab world and puts it in perspective with regard to the language choices of publishers in the region.

The "Arab world," two words that evoke the linguistic unity of three cultural sub-regions: the Maghreb, the Mashreq, and the Arabian Peninsula—all tied by their official language, Arabic. But in reality, each of the twenty-two countries of this Arab League has its own dialect—derived from Arabic—which is *de facto* the mother tongue of its citizens. Minority languages are also spoken and often written in the majority of these countries, and Western languages are more or less extensively used within the countries. Being the official language of approximately twenty countries and the reference language of millions of emigrants around the world, Arabic does not have a lack of rivals on its own soil, pulled as it is between dialects, linguistic minorities, and foreign languages.

The common Standard Arabic

In Arab countries, linguistic problems are especially visible in the publishing field—where Standard Arabic or *fusha* (فصحى), a sort of *lingua franca* that unites

these different countries, occupies the largest space. Further, Standard Arabic is the only form of Arabic employed in textbooks whether it is for learning the language or for the different subjects taught in school, from History to Science. As a result, it is a language that schoolchildren in Arab countries know and read, but it is also one that they learn as a foreign language in regard to its structure and (often) vocabulary. Standard Arabic is not spoken on a daily basis despite being the official and literary language; instead, the languages used as mother tongues in Arab countries vary and include dialects (Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, Emirian, etc.), minority languages (Amazigh, Syriac, Armenian, Kurdish, etc.), or even French and sometimes English. Although the dialects are often close to Arabic, they remain independent language forms whose vocabulary and structure are largely influenced by borrowings from Syriac, Coptic, Persian, Turkish, Italian, French, etc. according to region. These regional influences render the dialectal form of one population more understandable to its closest neighbors than to the rest of the

Arab world. Therefore, a Moroccan can understand an Algerian better than a Palestinian, who, in turn, will find it easier to understand a Syrian than an Iraqi.

It is by the use of Standard Arabic that textbooks manage to go beyond the geographical linguistic borders. Used by children of different backgrounds, from Mauritania to Iraq, they create a linguistic connection between people of different cultures. It is this same form of Arabic that is used in both picture books and children's books. However, it is very unusual and almost exceptional that children, even at school, can freely express themselves in this language even though they use it in their essays and reading. It is a language in which children mainly have receptive skills and are hard put to tell a dream or an anecdote, for example. It is even less obvious for the Arab diaspora, whose children are faced with the necessity of learning two "foreign" languages (as the language of their host country often becomes their first language)—the dialect and the Standard. The first one is useful and necessary for family and friends, and the second is the only tool for writing, but also for speech that has been prepared in advance (such as television news broadcastings or political speeches). The first decade of the twenty-first century thus saw the launch of a project called "Arabi 21" by the Arab Thought Foundation (a Saudi foundation based in Beirut). Its principal goal is to allow children of the twenty-first century to claim Arabic as their mother tongue, thereby reinforcing the role of Standard Arabic.

A strongly standardized Arabic

Even though the language of publication in children's literature is principally Standard Arabic, it is mainly a careful and even controlled Arabic that is used in this context in order to avoid all dialectal vocabulary and all loan words from Western languages. Indeed, one word of local belonging or a small deviation from the language of school communities (management committee and teachers) is sufficient for the book to lose its public abroad and for parents to speak against the book and forbid it to children. The use of a dialectal word in a children's book can be considered by teachers to be crude, inappropriate, or even incorrect—even when that word is featured in Arabic dictionaries—simply because it has the misfortune to be used in spoken Arabic, while its syn-

onym has the good fortune to appear in literary texts. Consequently, this leaves a rather limited vocabulary for authors of children's literature. Furthermore, some publishers—mainly Lebanese—tend to replace the Indian numerals used in the Middle East with the Arabic numerals used in the Maghreb in the hope to increase their sales. Similarly, the names of the months of the year in the Mashreq region (which originate from its pre-Islamic cultural heritage) are often replaced or followed by the names of the months used in other Arab countries, which are in fact a local pronunciation of Western words. For example, the publishing house Asala Publishers will use "*nīs n-abr l'*"¹ in a book that recounts the story of a traditional dessert from Beirut made in April, حلوة يا مفتقة (Delicious "mouffata'a" [Lebanese pastry]), hence showing that the publisher's target audience is more likely to be the Arab World than Lebanon. On the other hand, we hear the self-righteous people of Lebanon railing at the very poetic and inventive vocabulary of the author and publisher Nadine Tōuma, when she expresses the desire to "open the debate about the choice of Arabic language in children's books."² These same people also reject the language use of Samah Idriss, an author and publisher appalled by the calcification of Arabic, of dialectal or foreign vocabulary (words, nevertheless, well-known to children). And this in spite of Idriss explaining the origin and the meaning of the words according to the dictionary.

Moreover, the written form of Standard Arabic presents some small orthographic differences in different Arab countries. For example, some words and grammar rules are treated differently from one country to another: the rule for *hamza* (ء), which is a variable in the orthography of the Syrian-Lebanese area, is applied in the majority of Arab countries with the exception of Egypt, where it is fixed.³ Likewise, the punctuation of some letters like *yā'* (ي) or *tā' marbūta* (آ), which is necessary in order to avoid the confusion between two close words in the Syrian tradition, is absent in Egypt, where words have to be understood according to their context.⁴ The choice of a term among its numerous synonyms can also differ significantly from one country to another.

The stakes of dissemination

Despite these small differences, Standard Arabic remains prevalent in the majority of Arab coun-

tries, and it is the form of the language that permits Maghreb writers to be read in the Mashriq and vice versa. It is also in this same Standard Arabic that children's literature is the most prolific. When a book is refused somewhere or does not have the same success outside its country of origin, this is attributed to cultural differences rather than linguistic ones. The experience of the Lebanese publisher Dar al-Adab illustrates this problem well. Their sales, like those of other specialized Lebanese publishers, are very low in the countries of the Maghreb. However, after being reluctant due to strong cultural differences Tunisia ended up making its public libraries buy a certain quantity of Dar al-Adab's books. This is probably due to the enthusiasm for the Lebanese dialect caused by the dissemination of Lebanese songs on satellite channels.

The limited circulation of some books is often due to economic reasons. Lebanese book editions, for example, are too expensive in comparison to Egyptian ones, which strongly limits their sales outside of their borders. It was only with the absence of Egypt at the International Book Fair of Algiers (Salon International du Livre d'Alger [SILA]) in 2010—following a quarrel between football supporters of the two rival countries—that the Lebanese publishers could see their sales rise steeply in Algeria for the first time. This unique experience did not recur the following year, even though Lebanon was the guest of honor at SILA 2011, as Egypt was back.

The dialect—a publication language?

Publishing in a dialect is a choice that only a few writers or publishers have made in the Arab world. This is due, in the first place, to the aforementioned reasons, the common market and dialectal differences. Another reason is the disdainful view of a dialect as a minor and altered form of Standard Arabic and, therefore, unworthy of featuring in books. Thus, *نورا وقصتها* (Noura and Her Story), a beautiful pic-

ture book about the notion of belonging to a community which was published by Asala in Beirut, is a prime example of the problematic issue of language in publication: its author Fatima Sharafeddine first wrote it in the Lebanese dialect, but her publisher then asked her to “translate” it to Standard Arabic out of fear that schools and other Arab countries would not purchase it.

Nonetheless, in the 1970–80s, Dar Al-Fata Al-Arabi (a Palestinian publishing house specialized in children's literature) was already taking risks by publishing from Beirut the stories and drawings of writers coming from different Arab countries. Dar Al-Fata's texts were generally published in Standard Arabic, but this did not stop this house from also publishing some works in dialect. The series of the Egyptian illustrator and writer Hijazi, *تنابلة الصبيان* (The Lazy Boys), was hence published. This comic, written in dialectal Egyptian, was of course released in Egypt but also elsewhere in the Arab world—particularly among Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrians—much like Dar al-Fata's other publications. This was achieved in a time when the media and satellite channels had not yet started to diffuse Egyptian

Arabic among Arabs. If it is difficult today to know more about the reception of these books by the readers of the time, it is still clear that for their publisher the content came before its linguistic form. For example, the publication of this book, which tells the story of an oppressed population opposed to a few lazy kings and ministers, had to be done independently of all commercial consideration.

The use of dialectal Arabic is often easier for Egyptian publishers than Lebanese ones, if only for commercial reasons. It is indeed less complicated to sell a book printed in 3000 copies in Egypt, where the population is approximately 80 millions, than in Lebanon, where it is about 4 millions. Furthermore, in contrast to Egypt, the question of dialectal literature has always been a politically and ideologi-



cally polemical topic in Lebanon, one that divides the country between nationalists and pan-Arabs. Accordingly, it is only recently that Lebanese publishers of children's literature have had a few noticeable publications in dialectal Arabic. In 2008, Dar Onboz published a Lebanese tale *سبعة و ٧* (Seven and 7), a beautiful large-format picture book whose price (about four times more expensive than the average Arabic children's book) rendered it almost financially inaccessible. The same publishing house had earlier in 2007 published *شولون البحر* (What Color is the sea) also in dialect, but thanks to a subvention, the book was distributed to children for free. In both cases, the books were welcomed with enthusiasm by children and by the critics, without the language being a subject of debate. This is probably because the work did not mix Standard Arabic and dialect, hence positioning itself clearly as a ludic book rather than a learning book. It is important to note that the publisher of these two books is also the author.

Minority languages in publishing

Concerning the minority languages, their problems are more political than linguistic. In some countries, it is the state rather than the market that is the obstacle for publication in a minority language. As for example in Morocco, where Arabic is the official language, it is only since July 2011 that Amazigh was finally recognized as the second official language of the state, whereas it is the mother tongue of 40% of Moroccans. But the recognition of this language by the Maghrebis started earlier, often via the French translation and publication of traditional tales and poems. Today, thanks to a reinvented alphabet—the Tifinagh—children's books are published in Amazigh and are often bilingual, written in French and Arabic. The Moroccan publisher Yomad has published two decades' worth of children's books in French and Arabic as well as in Amazigh, some titles being thus released in three versions. Similarly, some books are published in Kabyle in Algiers, but generally in roman extended characters. Even though Berber is spoken in places

other than Algeria and Morocco, these are, to this day, the only two countries to give such an important place to this language and its ramifications. And although Amazigh is used in Libyan publications, the same cannot be said about Siwi in Egypt and other minority languages outside Arabic-speaking Africa, such as Fula in Mauritania; these countries have yet to produce children's books in these languages or dialects—Arabic itself being rare in children's literature in some regions.

In the countries of the Persian Gulf—from Saudi Arabia to Kuwait and United Arab Emirates—Arabic is the mother tongue, and it is in this language that children's literature is published. In 2007, Kalimat, a publishing house specialized in children's literature and, thus, one of its kind in the Gulf countries, opened in the Emirates. Drawing from the Lebanese experience, Kalimat even employed a manager, as well as writers and illustrators from Lebanon, and published, in Standard Arabic, texts modelled on the publications of this country. It was only when the publisher had established itself thanks to a catalogue of quality books in Standard Arabic that it started moving towards local creation, publishing texts written by authors from the Gulf intended for children of the region. Thus, Emirati nursery rhymes

and stories of scarves are now published by Kalimat for the children of the Gulf in Standard Arabic, but with a vocabulary enriched by regional particularities that could not be present in the earlier publications. It is in this way that the traditional tale *غاية والحنيش* (Ghaya and the Snake) was published. This picture book has been released in book fairs of numerous Arab countries and has particularly drawn the public's attention by its title: Ghaya being an Emirati girl's name and *ḥunaych* حنيش being the Emirati word for snake, which is the synonym of the Standard Arabic words *thu'bān* (ثعبان) or *ḥayyat* (حية). Even though these books are little read in other Arab countries due to cultural differences, they represent a particular experience for the Gulf countries, which up till then had to rely solely on the Egyptian and Lebanese imports for quality reading material.



Even though English is spoken a great deal more than Arabic in the Emirates⁵ and even though there are immigrant communities from Europe, America, and Asia, it is rare that works in the languages of immigrants are locally published. Therefore, it is mainly an imported literature that is available to non-Arabic-speaking children.

A strong tradition of multilingual and multiethnic publishing exists in Lebanon, where two linguistic minorities in particular—the Syriac and the Armenian—publish children's books in their languages fairly regularly. It is essentially translations of children's books and picture books of the world heritage that are published in Syriac, a Semitic language close to Arabic, with the objective of protecting an endangered language. The case for Armenian is different because Armenian children's literature published in Lebanon is aimed towards children who use this language with their families as their mother tongue and who often learn it in school as their first language in parallel with Arabic and French or English. Publications in Armenian often receive subsidies that allow the publishers to sell for a lower price in order to disseminate the language and ensure its survival, since the Armenian community in Lebanon feels responsible for the conservation of this Western Armenian, which differs from the Eastern Armenian spoken in Armenia. We thus see translations as well as more modern works. Contrary to literature published in Arabic, French, or English, which is more widely available in bookshops, these publications have narrower distribution; they can generally only be purchased directly from the publishers or in bookshops that belong to the Syrians or Armenians of Lebanon.

Furthermore, the use of a minority language can often be the source of problems in the Arab world as the language often appears to be the only way to unite people. Consequently, it has often been difficult for the Kurds to publish works in their language in Arab countries. We also see the Copts struggling to use their language in

Egypt, publishing language textbooks, dictionaries, or liturgical books despite resistance, but not venturing to do the same for literary works.

Publications in Western languages

Regarding publications in Western languages, it is mainly in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Lebanon that they can be found, especially French ones. The works in French, which are particularly present in Morocco and Algeria, tell the history of these countries, their tales and legends, or even problems specific to their francophone children (such as emigration and identity issues). For example, it is in French that the first works on the Amazigh heritage in the Maghreb appeared. Some extracurricular publications, such as the Lebanese publisher Samir Éditeur, favor children's picture books in French, whose public is assured by schools. Similarly, some authors, such as the Lebanese Joumana Medlej, prefer French or English for their publications, which are translated into Arabic thereafter.

If a debate on the modernity of Arabic seems to arise, it is clear that the resistance to its change remains the strongest—driven by a loyalty to the notion of a sacred, timeless, and unifying language. Little effort is made to create real ties between the Arabic language and the Arabs. Further, this language, traditionally considered very beautiful and very rich, does not correspond to the contemporary “look” and thus discourages young people.

The receptiveness to the languages of others, especially the languages of minorities, poses a real problem. In the Arab world, it is a sort of identity questioning that seems to be opened up by the minority writings addressed to children. Children's literature of the Arab world is a field still too young and little explored to speculate on its future. But one can imagine that the continuous opening of the Arab countries to each other, thanks especially to satellites and the Internet, will allow for better cultural circulation and greater freedom of expression.



¹ Nīsān is the Syriac equivalent of the name of the month April used in the Syrian-Lebanese region, and *Abrīl* is the Egyptian adaptation of the English April or even the Maghrebi adaption of the French *avril*.

² <http://www.takamtikou.fr/dossiers/dossier-2010-takamtikou-a-20-ans/la-maison-d-edition-dar-onboz-une-audace-editoriale>

³ For example, the word *mas'ul* (responsible) is written مسئول according to the Egyptian orthography and مسؤول in the orthography called Damascene.

⁴ Example *yā'*: the name Ali in Syrian-Lebanese is written علي, whereas in Egypt the dots of *ya* are removed with على, creating thus a homonym to the preposition على – on. Example *tā' marbūta*: in Egypt, « school » is written مدرسة whereas it is written مدرسة in Syria and Lebanon.

⁵ Half of the people from the Emirates come from the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan, India, the Republic of the Maldives, etc.), and the rest of them comes from other Arab countries, Iran and Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia, etc.). The language that all these people from different origins share is English.

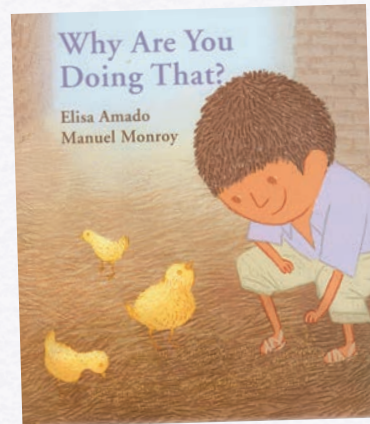
First published in French in *Takam Tikou* (2012); translated by Raphaëlle Boissel.



HALA BIZRI Hala Bizri is a librarian and a tutor. In 2005, she joined the Lebanese National Library where she continues to work. Her interest in children's literature in Arabic inspired her to be part of the editorial team of *Qiraat Saghira* قراءات صغيرة, a bilingual Lebanese critical review for children's books in which she has published numerous articles and distinct critiques. She has also participated in juries for selecting the best books for children, and she continues to do research and instruct children's literature courses. She is currently preparing a doctoral thesis on the history of publishing in Lebanon from 1920 to 1960.

“Why are you doing that?” asks Chepito of everyone around him as they go about their daily tasks. Then he sings “What for? What for?”, as this adorable picture book takes a young child's natural curiosity and turns it into the cause of an explication of his community. Guatemalan born author Elisa Amado crafts a sensitive text in which Chepito takes readers through his morning encounters with friends and neighbors, all producers of the food he will eat at lunch. Mexican illustrator Manuel Monroy supplies lovely illustrations of the child and his village. While the pictures and narrative combine to make a sweet reading experience for a young child, I question the lack of context, of locatedness. While the book clearly has a Latin American setting and while it includes a glossary of the Hispanic terms used, it provides nothing in the way of contextual details that would help young readers outside of Latin America situate the narrative. Given the brevity of the text, the book could be bilingual in Spanish and English, and some sense of its situation would go some way to make it relevant to all children and the adults who read them this otherwise lovely book.

Roxanne Harde



BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Why Are You Doing That?
Elisa Amado
(Illus. Manuel Monroy)
Toronto: Groundwood Books,
2014. Unp.
ISBN: 9781554984534
(Picturebook; Ages 3+)

Books on Books

Schanoes, Veronica. ***Fairy Tales, Myth, and Psychoanalytical Theory: Feminism and Retelling the Tale***. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.

To open her book's "Introduction: The Mother's Looking Glass," Veronica Schanoes offers a "sorcerous mirror" scene from Tanith Lee's *White as Snow* (2000), where a daughter's desire activates her mother's own magic power; Schanoes guides readers to see how Lee's representation of "mother-daughter dyads and mirrors, vision and revision, to represent feminine subjectivity" re-envision "Snow White"—so often used to reinforce competition between women—into a feminist story. Figures of doubling, permeable boundaries and revisionist desires apply to texts as well as psyches in this remarkable critical study of how fairy-tale retellings from the 1970s and 1990s (from Angela Carter to Kelly Link and Catherynne Valente) mirror contemporaneous feminist psychoanalysis (from Nancy Chodorow to the relational theories of the Wellesley Stone Center). Mirrors, for Schanoes, "combine truth and illusion, and such a combination is fruitful rather than deadly if we recognize and understand what we are seeing/reading"—that is, "the confluence of thought and seeming" in which "fantasy can be an accurate, feminist reflection" (111)—a reality that is both familiar and strange. By exploring such uncanny doubles, Schanoes seeks to reclaim an intertextuality that is "collaborative" and "affectionate" (8), to reconnect myth and fairy tales

with psychoanalytical theories of a multiple and fluid feminine subjectivity, and to show how the mirror as a source of self-creation is "a space for expressing the lived experiences of women and envisioning the feminist change necessary to improve those experiences" (9). In doing so, she produces a regenerative reading of second-wave feminist psychoanalysis, perspicaciously nuanced analyses of fairy-tale and myth revisions, and an understanding of fantasy that is both generous and politicized.

Developing her captivating essay "Book as Mirror, Mirror as Book," the book's argument is twofold: we benefit from reading second-wave feminist psychoanalytical theories together with feminist revisions of fairy tales and myths because their approaches to feminine subjectivity developed at the same time and responded to one another; both theory and literature focus their view of feminine subjectivity on the mother-daughter relation and mirroring as sites for revision and change. While my own work on fairy-tale revisions is not psychoanalytical, I find *Fairy Tales, Myth, and Psychoanalytical Theory's* take on psychoanalysis to be refreshing and significant. On the one hand, Freudian and Jungian analyses tend to dominate the discussion of the unconscious in fairy tales and myth, relegating women's desires to second place; on the other hand, with the notable exception of Shuli Barzilai's, many psychological feminine and feminist analyses of fairy tales and myth are in the self-help mode and do not take revisions into much consideration. So, method-

ologically, the book pioneers and exemplifies a new and much needed understanding of how a psychoanalysis that takes women's subjectivity as the norm without idealizing it bears on fantasy and feminist rewritings in particular.

The book has two parts: the first two chapters focus on mother-daughter relations, the final two on the mirror trope. Hinging these discussions of doubling tropes is Chapter 3, "Revisions and Repetition," a reflection on various twentieth-century theories of rewriting and influence. Not only does Schanoes provide original readings of well-known revisionary texts such as Angela Carter's, but her project is innovative in reading canonized writers along with Kelly Link and other writers of genre fiction. Schanoes's claims concerning revision as a transformative process that depends on and nurtures multiplicity and feminine subjectivity are provocative in a productive way. We need more theoretically sophisticated readings of experimental fictions, just as we need new feminist readings that revitalize gendered perspectives of storytelling and subjectivization. Schanoes's book does important work in all of these areas.

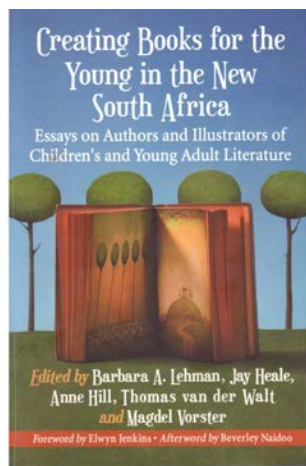
A few more qualities make this book stand out for me. The introduction is exemplary in its clarity, nuanced and careful presentation of arguments, and communication of the book's distinctive interventions in fairy-tale studies, genre and adaptation studies, and feminist theory and literature. The arguments unfold with ease, clearly the result

of serious grappling and critical intimacy with a range of theories (French and American second-wave feminism especially) and texts that Schanoes brings together elegantly. She manages to discuss both myth (especially Persephone and Demeter) and fairy-tale revisions, without conflating these genres; what's more, she discusses a wide range of women writers—such as Toni Morrison, Tanith Lee, Angela Carter, Terri Windling, and Kelly Link—without conflating their different projects. As the author of haunting fictions herself—such as “Burning Girls,” “Among the Thorns,” and “How To Bring Someone Back from the Dead”—Veronica Schanoes has a wonderfully fine ear for language, her style is confident and accessible, and the sensitivity as well as purposefulness with which she works through textual intricacies enacts the permeable boundaries of critical and creative writing.

Overall, this book makes a revitalizing contribution to feminist understandings of fairy tales and fantasy. At a time when writing (about) fairy-tale retellings is quite popular and some scholars fall for an all-too-patchy interdisciplinarity or a presentist perspective, Veronica Schanoes's work shines brightly for me—the product of insightful reflection, well-honed literary critical skills, a generous understanding of why imaginative literature matters, and remarkably incisive writing. While Schanoes does not focus on fairy tales as children's literature, of special interest to scholars in this field will be the focus on daughter stories in the mother-daughter relationship as well as Chapter 4, “Through the Looking Glass: Mirrors, Fantasy, and Reality,” where texts by Hans Christian Andersen, Lewis Carroll, and J.K. Rowling are invoked with their uncanny doubles.

CRISTINA BACCHILEGA

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Barbara A. Lehman, Jay Heale, Anne Hill, Thomas van der Walt, and Magdel Vorster (Eds) ***Creating Books for the Young in the New South Africa: Essays on Authors and Illustrators of Children's and Young Adult Literature***. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company 2014

This is an ambitious collection of 29 essays, each profiling a particular author or illustrator. Its broad scope signals that it is primarily intended as a resource for teachers, librarians, and scholars. Indeed, the preface confirms this and states that the aim was to raise awareness about South African children's literature around the world in the hope that it would be used more widely. The authors and illustrators were selected based on three criteria: their contribution to post-apartheid children's literature, the availability of the works in English, and their ability to “reflect the South African context” (7). The contributors to the volume, primarily from South Africa, but also from the US, were selected for their expertise in the field and include a number of the relatively few writers and academics actively researching South African children's and youth literature. The collection is divided into three sections: first, authors and illustrators working prior to 1994 but active in the new South Africa; second, those who achieved recognition largely after 1994; and, finally, a short section on newcomers to the field. Many of the well-known South African children's writers are

found here—including Lesley Beake, Dianne Case, and Jenny Robson—although, inevitably, many names are absent. A particularly attractive aspect of the book is the inclusion of profiles of eight illustrators—such as Piet Grobler, Niki Daly and Joan Rankin—whose work is often neglected in academic research.

The large number of contributors—there are 17 of them—results in a wide range of approaches and styles, which the editors regard as one of the strengths of the book, signifying a diversity of views. This is certainly reflected in the essays, although the unusual practice of some contributors using an author's first name rather than surname is, for me at least, rather inappropriate in a scholarly work. Further, no doubt for reasons of space, several of the contributors include no, or very few, references to other research, which may lessen the academic impact of the collection. Related to lack of space, one of the risks of such a collection is the inevitable restriction on the length of the essays, potentially resulting in a degree of superficiality and a lack of critical depth. Fewer contributions, however, would have resulted in a distorted view of the literature, reducing the book's value as a useful resource. An overall balance appears to have been achieved and several of the contributions succeed in balancing informative content with critical analysis and opinion.

In the first section, Maritha Snyman's excellent essay on Marita van der Vyver provides a critique of the main themes of van der Vyver's works and an appreciation of the high caliber of her writing, focusing on her reputation as a feminist writer (84). Also a prolific translator of fairy tales into Afrikaans, van der Vyver is quoted as saying that she is fascinated by fairy tales because of “the possibility of transformation” that they bring (87). Evidence for this lies in her young adult novel, *The Hidden Life of Hanna Why* (2002), which has been interpreted as a modern fairy tale in which Hanna experiences both transformation and growing maturity through a process of departure, isolation, and victory over the villain. Snyman's essay whets the appetite to such an extent that readers will

be clamoring for more of van der Vyver's works to be made available in English.

Jay Heale's essay on Chris van Wyk makes a significant contribution, especially as publication came only shortly before van Wyk's death in October 2014, representing a huge loss to the South African literary scene. Heale highlights the interrelationship between van Wyk's own life as an acknowledged member of a formerly underprivileged community and his writing, prompting him to provide children with meaningful and entertaining reading material. Perhaps one of his best achievements is the picture book version of Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* with "evocative and striking" (34) illustrations by Paddy Bouma, the subject of another of Heale's essays in this volume.

In the second section, Genevieve Hart's sensitive essay focuses on Gcina Mhlope, a writer and storyteller who has made a major impact on the local and international scene. As a storyteller, Mhlope is renowned for her mesmerizing and magical performances—she has an extraordinary voice that Hart justifiably describes as "her musical instrument" (166). Mhlope is much more than a storyteller; she is also women's rights activist, a role reflected in her stories for children, which, while full of humor, often have a political message as she challenges conventions and stereotypes in South African society.

In the third section of the volume, Rajendra Chetty presents Kagiso Lesego Molepe as an African feminist writer who has made a huge contribution to local literature and whose works all feature black female protagonists. Chetty also notes how Lesego Molepe highlights language as a means of both isolation and unification, an aspect of a multilingual South Africa that rarely features in young adult novels. The themes of her novels include student unrest in the 1980s, the gradual mixing of formerly segregated schools in the 1990s, and the experience of young women growing up in a contemporary but traditionally patriarchal society. Another contribution in this last section is by Anne Hill, who focuses on Sally Partridge, a writer of the new genre literature appearing

in South Africa today. Hill focuses on Partridge's exploration of malevolent forces and the effects on her young protagonists in narratives which she describes as triggering a loss of innocence and a fundamental reconfiguration of lives and attitudes.

The essays on illustrators provide information and insight into the many and varied techniques and approaches used in South African picture books from the mid-1980s onwards. One overriding impression is the influence of the African continent and the focus on bringing cultures together. Alida Bothma's inspiration is described as partly coming from nature and her "love for the African continent" (21). Barbara Lehman focuses on Niki Daly's ability to "[dream] himself into someone else's skin," reflecting his own experience and interpretation of the 'rainbow nation' (54). Magdel Vorster describes Piet Grobler's illustrations as a blend of the African and the European, again bringing "different cultures together" (128), while Erin Reilly-Sanders points to Elizabeth Pulles's role in "changing the colors of South Africa to reflect the rich society that they depict" (197).

To conclude, this valuable volume of essays will be of immense assistance and significance to anyone wishing to explore South African children's literature over the last twenty five to thirty years.

JUDITH INGGS

Day, Sara K., Miranda A. Green-Barteet, and Amy L. Montz, eds. ***Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction***. Surrey: Ashgate, 2014.

The Ashgate Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present Series "recognizes and supports innovative work on the child and on literature" that "engages with current and emerging debates in the field," according to Series Editor Claudia Nelson. Indeed, one of its recent publications, *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction* (edited by Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Barteet, and Amy L. Montz), engages with one of the more visible and recent trends in young adult literature—dystopian fiction—and offers a new critical paradigm through which we can interpret such texts—liminality and girlhood. The eleven essays in this collection argue that the liminal spaces of young adult womanhood correlate to the liminal spaces of dystopian society and allow for "an explicit exploration of the rebellious girl protagonist, a figure who directly contradicts the common perception that girls are too young or too powerless to question the limitations placed upon them, much less to rebel and, in turn, fuel larger rebellions" (4). The collection smartly shows the ways in which "young women in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century dystopian fiction embody liminality, straddling the lines of childhood and adulthood, of individuality and conformity, of empowerment and passivity" (4).

The editors navigate this important conversation by situating the eleven essays across three parts: Reflections and Reconsiderations of Rebellious Girlhood, Forms and Signs of Rebellion, and Contexts and Communities of Rebellion. This organizational framework is hugely important to the success of this collection and allows the essays to speak to one another and not be limited only by thematic content. It would be quite easy for a project of this nature to result in loosely connected essays that share nothing more than similar topics; however, the editors should be recognized for their outstanding work, particularly in Parts I and II, which creates a new framework for

future scholarship on rebellion, girlhood, and dystopian literature.

Part I, made up of four essays, lays the foundation for a conversation on how dystopian narratives comment on real-world constructions of girlhood and adolescence, through a commonality of liminal spaces, both shaped by and shaping turn-of-the-twenty-first century cultural events. Ranging from Girl Power movements to the gender gap in STEM fields, this foregrounding works especially well, asserting how dystopian novels intersect with and speak to contemporary adolescence. While the essays in this section themselves lack a cohesive unification, the editors group these arguments by stating that “novels set in distant dystopian futures intersect and interrogate facets of contemporary adolescent womanhood” (11). Thus, the authors in Part I are able to cover a wide array of facets, which allows readers to imagine other ways the contemporary cultural landscape may intersect with these texts. Sonya Sawyer Fritz’s “Girl Power and Girl Activism in the Fiction of Suzanne Collins, Scott Westerfeld, and Moira Young” appropriately opens the collection, offering an engaging and exciting explanation of the recent popularity of dystopian texts and, more specifically, dystopian texts with strong female protagonists; she asserts that such texts and characters are a direct reflection and manifestation of the Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s and the rise of girl activism. In this way, the collection engages a true cultural studies meditation on the sociopolitical relevance of young adult dystopian texts in relation to young womanhood.

The four essays in Part II, *Forms and Signs of Rebellion*, expand upon Part I’s foundation of how the recent popularity of dystopian texts correlate to a specific social and cultural landscape of girlhood beginning in the 1990s and examine how that informs the nature of rebellion featured in these novels. While the dystopian landscapes of the novels are not examined in a similar late-twentieth century sociopolitical context per se, the agency of the female protagonists, as is the shape of their rebellions, is particularly in relation to the body. In that way, the editorial framing allows the

reader to make these connections to a broader late-twentieth century landscape, and because of this framing, Part II is perhaps the strongest of the three in the collection. Amy L. Montz’s “Rebels in Dresses: Distractions of Competitive Girlhood in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction” and Mary Jeanette Moran’s “The Three Faces of Tally Youngblood: Rebellious Identity-Changing in Scott Westerfeld’s ‘Uglies’ Series” both offer insightful considerations of gendered expectations of the female body and how that impacts and assuages the power of the female rebel character. Moran’s opening meditation on the product tie-ins with the film release of *Catching Fire* is a profound moment of the collection, stressing that these gendered expectations of the female body do not just exist within the pages of the novels. As she persuasively argues, both from outside real-world events and inside textual analysis of the *Uglies* series, the adolescent female body is a site of contention in conversations on power, agency, and rebellion because of age and gender.

The three essays of the final section, *Contexts and Communities of Rebellion*, are loosely connected through constructions of space, place, and population. It is difficult to find a unifying conclusion to the collection through these three, in light of the strong sociopolitical grounding of the first two sections. However, the final two chapters, June Pulliam’s “Real or Not Real—Katniss Everdeen Loves Peeta Melark: The Lingering Effects of Discipline in the ‘Hunger Games’ Trilogy” and Ann M.M. Childs’ “The Incompatibility of Female Friendships and Rebellions,” do seem in conversation through ideas of interpersonal relationships, which offers an interesting argument when read alongside one another. Childs’s argument is one of the more unique of this final section, elaborating on the commonly discussed hopeful ending of young adult dystopian fiction and suggesting that this is often accomplished through the sacrifice of female friendships. The final chapter of any edited collection always occupies an awkward position, as the reader hopes for a conclusion focusing on the collection’s overall purpose and not just that particular author’s argument.

Childs is a smart choice here as she is able to navigate both her specific argument and return to the larger idea that “the young adult dystopia encourages the reader to question her place in society” (200).

Perhaps the only thing missing from this collection is an argument explicitly speaking to why Suzanne Collins’s *Hunger Games* trilogy and *Katniss* are so popular among all of these dystopian texts and characters, given the prominence of Collins in the collection—whether there is perhaps something unique about the liminal girlhood and dystopian spaces of that series that accounts for its popularity or it is simply a marketing phenomenon. Despite this, I imagine the editors received many more proposals dedicated to the *Hunger Games* trilogy and were wise to include chapters that analyze a range of young adult dystopian texts on the market and not just Collins’s blockbuster. In doing so, they create insightful and innovative scholarship that places young adult literature at the center of social and cultural conversations in the twenty-first century. The collection theorizes girlhood and dystopian fiction in new ways and offers scholars and readers a new paradigm for understanding both.

ABBIE VENTURA

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Karen Sands-O'Connor and Marietta A. Frank. **Internationalism in Children's Series** edited by New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 232 p. ISBN 9781137360304.

As part of the Critical Approaches to Children's Literature series by Palgrave Macmillan, *Internationalism in Children's Series* adds an innovatively global perspective to one of the most popular forms that children's texts can take. Edited by Karen Sands-O'Connor and Marietta A. Frank, the collection's eleven articles range not only in historical breadth from the nineteenth century to the present, but also in cultural and theoretical depth as the series is examined through the idea of internationalism and the resulting "complex interactions between readers, books, and global power and participation."

The volume's chronological organization emphasizes the global trends and ideas that have impacted children's publishing at various points in the series' development. Part I, "Nineteenth-Century Series Go Abroad," outlines the origins of international series books as influenced by American expansionism and European imperialism. Chris Nesmith begins the conversation with his exploration of Jacob Abbott's Rollo Books and the importance of the "young [American] man's education" and rite of passage as influenced by European travel. Janis Dawson's focus on Victorian girls' magazines shows how Britain's imperial interests fuel a sense of female adventure and participation in nation building.

Part II – "Syndicates, Empires, and Politics" – uses the link between class mobility, literacy, and learning from the traveller's experience of the nineteenth century as a foundational model for the twentieth century series with an internationally political flair. While Sands-O'Connor's chapter on the Stratemeyer Syndicate points to the series as an ideal place to introduce children to attitudes about other countries, Jani L. Barker explores how Lucy Fitch Perkins' Twins series uses internationalism to promote an American sense of wellbeing. Teaching children about other lands and cultures, however, brings its own paradoxical dangers

of reinforcing "home-grown stereotypes" as Frank observes in "'A bit of life actually lived in a foreign land': Internationalism as World Friendship in Children's Series." Exotic locales as foreign space (Michael G. Cornelius' "Lost Cities: Generic Conventions, Hidden Places, and Primitivism in Juvenile Series Mysteries") and a focus on the foreigner figure and the connections made between reader, author, and the outside world (David Rudd's "'But why are you so foreign?': Blyton and Blighty") round out Part II's idea that the series at this time valued both international understanding and the practice of cultural imperialism.

The boundaries and definitions of the series and internationalism are transformed once more in the third and final section of the volume, "Translating Histories and Cultures." Opening the debate is Deniz Arzuk's "'Universal Republic of Children?': 'Other' Children in *Doğan Kardeş* Children's Periodical" which traces how the Turkish periodical's attitudes towards other ethnic and national groups became influenced by and reflective of Turkey's political changes. Hilary Brewster provides fans of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series with a look at internationalism through the lens of translation studies and the linguistic and cultural implications of "(re)-creating" the popular text. Irish transnationalism from two different perspectives rounds out Part III with Charlotte Beyer's "'Hungry ghosts': Kirsty Murray's Irish-Australian Children of the Wind Series" and Patricia Kennon's "Building Bridges to Intercultural Understanding: The Other in Contemporary Irish Children's Literature." Beyer's discussion, centering on the child-migrant and Australian identity and culture, negotiates the challenges of postcolonialism, while Kennon focuses on a series of Irish picture books that extend and explore the issues of displacement, Irishness, and national identity through the depiction of the migrant.

As the editors and contributors of this collection defend, internationalism's presence in children's series is becoming increasingly more focused on a global movement with multiple voices and cross-cultural perspectives. Their voices provide a valuable

background and direction to continued discussion and research on the children's series, and above all, promotes Sands-O'Connor and Frank's conclusion that "one of the keys to getting children to take an interest in the world is to let them know they are not alone."

MELISSA LI SHEUNG YING,
Queen's University, Canada

Flanagan, Victoria. **Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction: The Posthuman Subject.** Critical Approaches to Children's Literature Series. Palgrave: Macmillan, 2014.

With *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction: The Posthuman Subject*, Victoria Flanagan encourages readers to stop wallowing in the fear-mongering of popular dystopian young adult novels and discover new stories that represent young people's engagements with technology as a positive step in human evolution. In her book, the author discusses familiar titles such as *Ender's Game*, *Feed*, *The Hunger Games*, *Uglies* and *Little Brother* but also highlights lesser known novels (e.g., *The Silver Metal Lover*, *Eyelash: A Blog Novel*, *serafina67*, and "Anda's Game") that are appearing alongside the plethora of "anti-tech" dystopias produced for youth today.

Flanagan suggests that, by highlighting the ways technology can "enhance and deepen our understanding of what it means to be human in the modern era" (187), new young adult literature supports posthumanism as a necessary, contemporary discourse. Emerging authors, she states, are exploring the many ways youth construct identity through their use of the internet socially (e.g., through computing, gaming, social networking, and blogging) and the ways they connect technologies and bodies (e.g., through cyborg narratives, use of avatars, and online explorations of sexuality). More importantly, new narratives also represent young people as knowledgeable and complicit agents in their engagement with the internet. Flanagan supports her

arguments with interdisciplinary theories and focuses on themes such as youth and digital citizenship (Chapter 3), technology, female subjectivity and embodiment (Chapter 4), and surveillance societies (Chapter 5). In chapters 2 and 6, she also draws attention to the ways authors reflect posthumanism through changing narrative strategies (e.g., using cyborg narrators) and formats (e.g., producing “technorealist” novels that reflect/mimic the linguistic codes of online media engagement).

The first chapter begins with a necessary discussion of competing posthumanist philosophies in order to identify Flanagan’s use of terms. While this opening distinguishes critical ideas and provides context for her application of posthumanist theory to youth literature, it is a challenging read hampered by a highly specialized discourse that may deter readers, especially those whose first language is not English. Greater use of plain-language to explain complex concepts, and editing for repetition, would have made the chapter more coherent and accessible to a wider audience. In this introductory chapter, Flanagan also neglects to explain her use of the term “virtual reality.” This is a significant oversight, as she employs it throughout the book to refer generally to cyberspace (e.g., “Identifying an emerging trend in children’s literature—blogging and chat-room narratives—this chapter explores the positive social effects of virtual reality in these contexts, particularly for young girls, where online communities offer support and encouragement” [9]). Because critical and popular use of the term most often reflects Jaron Lanier’s (1987) specification of “virtual reality” as a technology that creates 3D simulated, immersive environments and not just any online space, Flanagan’s substitution of the term for cyberspace or the internet is consistently confusing.

This reader most appreciated Chapters 3, 4, and 5, which are more succinct, offer engaging readings of lesser known novels related to youth and technology, and tackle issues that have not been widely addressed in children’s literature criticism to this point. Chapter 3, for example, explores what it means for a young

person to be a ‘digital citizen’ in the context of children and young adult’s real world rights and freedoms. Here, Flanagan compares the bleak oppression of *Ender’s Game* with new narratives (e.g., *Little Brother* and *Ready Player One*) that offer youth of the future possibilities for agency, activism, and community in their engagements with technology.

In Chapter 4, Flanagan considers the ways technology can transform and extend female physicality through the examination of cyborg stories (e.g., *Silver Metal Lover*) and narratives that examine girls’ connections with their bodies both online and in real spaces. The author’s discussion of “Anda’s Game,” for example, seems particularly relevant at a time where there are real world concerns about women and girls’ experiences as gamers online (e.g., the Gamergate controversy). Flanagan’s recognition of female science fiction authors, characters, and gendered issues is also welcome as these aspects are still too often left out of scholarship concerning the genre. Additionally, this chapter addresses the critical concept of “embodied posthuman subjectivity” (100), which can help clarify what it means to be human and still corporeal as we increasingly engage with and rely on technology for communication, work, entertainment, knowledge, and exploration.

In Chapter 5, the author re-examines Foucault’s (1977) understanding of surveillance societies in a modern context. New narratives like *Little Brother* and *serafina67*, Flanagan suggests, represent young people as complicit subjects who submit to surveillance as well as monitor others online (e.g., friends, families, and strangers) in order to participate in culture. These stories reflect a more realistic and progressive understanding of youth, she contends, because they represent young people’s intuitive and sophisticated knowledge and use of technology.

Overall, Flanagan’s book includes much to interest those who would like to explore what it means to be human in a technological age or gain insight into how posthumanist philosophy is represented in children’s and young adult literature. By pointing scholars, teachers, and readers towards new

work that promotes positive representations of youth and technology, the author is advocating for recognition of young people’s knowledge and agency. It is important to note, however, that Flanagan’s work is based on the critical analysis of young adult literature (written by adults) from a highly educated adult reader’s perspective. Her arguments could be strengthened with the inclusion (or mention) of supporting research that provides insight into how *young adults* demonstrate their real world use of technology, how *they* are reading and interpreting the novels included in this study, and how they are using technology to voice their own posthuman narratives. Even if these considerations were not part of the scope of the project, they should be acknowledged in a work that seeks to better understand youth, their subjectivity, and their changing conceptions of humanity.

MAIJA-LIISA HARJU,
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Mills, Claudia, ed. ***Ethics and Children’s Literature.*** Ashgate Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.

Children’s literature has always bridged knowledge forms that modern times have tended to separate, such as ethics and facts or pedagogical guidance and entertainment. In many ways, the idea of the ethical seems integral to the idea of children’s literature itself. The often asymmetrical relationship between an adult author and his or her implied young reader invites questions of values and ethical considerations. Ethics may be inherent in the notion of “passing on” information in a cross-generational format. Further, questions of form, contents, and values can perhaps not be so easily separated as a modernist reading would suggest. In children’s literature, the why, how, and what have often been complexly intertwined. To exemplify the deep connection between ethical values and children’s literature, Knud Erik Løgstrup, the Danish philosopher

of modern ethics, argued that there should always be “light at the end of the tunnel” in young people’s texts.

Claudia Mills has edited a collection of highly stimulating essays on the relation between children’s literature and ethical questions. The essays in this volume cover a wide range of topics and texts from historic children’s literature to modern adaptations and remediations and current literature for the young. The collection is an exploration of a number of different ethical aspects at work in and around children’s literature. The essays are held together by a joint questioning of the “common sense” that may thrive among adults, professionals, and even researchers. To put it briefly, this is both an analytical and a critical collection that invites the reader to rethink several basic assumptions on the relation between the ethical and children’s literature *within* the literature itself and in the knowledge field.

The book is divided into four parts. The essays in the first section highlight questions and dilemmas of didacticism and different attitudes to the moral shaping of children in specific historic periods and in different national bodies of children’s literature. For instance, chapters on the “book of golden deeds” for children in the so-called Progressive Era around the turn of the 19th and early 20th centuries, on Latin-American children’s literature, and on African-American children’s literature of 1930-45 reveal that the so-called education/amusement divide before and after the Lewis Carroll generation is a historically untenable interpretation. In the editor’s words, these chapters “reveal that the dominant disdain for didacticism demands further interrogation” (1). The historic case studies and essays in part one demonstrate that didacticism in children’s literature is rather an ethical dilemma than a strict period feature.

The second part of the book takes up various aspects of the ethical as it appears in a range of classical and contemporary texts from C.S. Lewis’s Narnia series, Madeleine L’Engle’s fantasy novels on the Murry Children, and A.A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh books to Louis Sachar’s *Holes* and J.K. Rowling’s the Harry Potter series.

More specifically, the essays in this section focus on relations between the ethical and “meaning-making” (e.g., cognitive activity preceding action and producing a level of moral “discernment” in the Narnia books). In Madeleine L’Engle’s fantasy books, fantastic journeys create encounters with “otherness,” enabling moral growth. Moreover, the ethical is not necessarily part of a grand theory. In A.A. Milne’s Pooh books, it is part of the pleasure of reading to encounter an ethics of ordinary life and communal living. Thereby, Milne’s books are marked by a pronounced anti-totalitarian stance, choosing the ethics of lived life and pacifism rather than adhering to more impersonal goals or political ideologies. Other chapters in this section deal with “virtuous transgression” in recent children’s literature and in the early children’s literature of 1960s Taiwan. For instance, in the Harry Potter series, the protagonists also have to break moral rules in order to achieve a higher goal. They transgress the status quo.

As the editor argues, the “moral values expressed by a work cannot be separated from its aesthetic quality as a whole” since literary content and form are both important in the reading experience (8). The chapters in the third section of the book all engage in ethical analysis and criticism of specific texts for children. Chapters in this section include an interesting reading of the idea of anthropomorphism in children’s literature: How is this technique used as an ideology in specific texts and how could anthropomorphism be used responsibly in children’s literature? Another chapter analyzes the depiction of war in the mid-twentieth-century fantasy novels of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Whereas Lewis tends to demonize villains, which makes it easy to rationalize their destruction, Tolkien’s universe is more morally balanced and ethically truthful in the depiction of war. Finally, this section of the book is concluded by a return to Rousseau’s moral philosophical treatise *Emile*. It questions whether Rousseau’s critical view of reading is tenable today and whether the values within children’s literature are still important. It also poses the question of whether children’s literature should build positive

models of the world rather than depict its bleakest versions.

In the final section of the book, chapters turn to different kinds of responses to literature. What comes first in our engagement with literature, a love of reading or a critical resistance to its ideology? one author asks. The focus on readers’ engagement with narrative worlds certainly seems highly relevant in order to understand emergent paradigms and ecologies of reading (e.g., digital fanfiction and young people’s participation in popular culture). Another chapter focuses on children’s book awards and the problems of gate-keeping and moral evaluation of literature in our time. Another highlight in this section of the book is the ethical choices made when remediating (e.g., *The Hunger Games* from book to film version). It discusses whether different “knowledge media” have different affordances in terms of rendering ethical dilemmas and reflections. Finally, the concluding chapter in the book investigates how ethically-challenging children’s literature can be used to stimulate philosophical discussions with children in the vein of the philosophy-for-children movement.

As it appears, this book covers a wide range of literary types and critical issues. The volume is held together by a joint focus on explicating the idea of the ethical. This reader found it a highly interesting experience to delve into the many aspects and facets of the ethical as seen from a range of current critical perspectives.

HELENE HØYRUP

Royal School of Library and Information Science, University of Copenhagen

News 2/2015

Nahoko Uehashi 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Award Author Winner



Nahoko Uehashi after receiving her medal (© GE Creatividad)

Tales of Coexistence

I AM HONORED and profoundly grateful to receive this award. There are so many people I would like to thank for having made this possible.

Let me begin by thanking the Directors of the International Board on Books for Young People, IBBY Founder Ms. Jella Lepman, and the Jury of the Hans Christian Andersen Award for their tireless promotion of peace and international understanding through the medium of children's literature.

Thank you to JBBY, which selected me as the candidate from Japan, and to Cathy Hirano, who has done such a wonderful job of translating my work, including this speech, into English, and who has supported me in many ways.

Thank you to all the terrific editors and staff from Kasei-sha, Kodansha, Rironsha, and Shinchosha who made sure my works were published.

Thank you to my family and to my partner, who have helped me to grow and who support me in all that I do.

Thank you to the many authors whose works have enriched my life and nourished me, and thank you to my readers who enjoy the stories I write.

I am deeply grateful to all of you.

Let me also add, "Congratulations!" to fellow award winner, Roger Mello.

When the Award was announced, my editor called me from Italy. It was eleven-thirty at night in Japan, but I could hear loud cheering in the background and felt myself whisked away from the night into the bright Italian sunshine. And it suddenly hit me that on the other end of the phone, it was just as surely "here and now" in Italy as it was for me in Japan. At that same moment, it was noon, night, and morning, and people all over the world were living their lives.

Later, when I learned that the Jury had chosen me for this award because my works depict complex worlds and peoples with diverse value systems and environments, because they convey love and respect for nature and humankind, many episodes from my own life rose into my mind.

And a thought, deep and sure, washed through my heart like a wave against the shore. The thought that if any one of these episodes had not occurred—if I had not met that specific person, encountered that particular book, done that certain thing—I would not be experiencing the joy I feel today.

I grew up in an area of Tokyo known as shitamachi (literally, "downtown"). It is a very old area of the city that still retains its traditions and festivals and a sense of past eras, despite being located in the center of an ultramodern metropolis. As a child, I was physically weak and was often stuck in bed with a fever. But that proved to be a blessing in disguise. Because I was often bedridden,

my grandmother told me many tales, and my parents read me many books to help me pass the time. As a result, by the time I was five or six, I was completely addicted to stories.



In this photo, you can see me sitting on my mother's lap with my hand raised regally in the air. It must have been a special occasion, such as my birthday, because my mother is dressed in the traditional kimono which she almost never wore. My grandmother is sitting on the left, holding my teddy bear.

My grandmother came not from Tokyo but from southern Japan. She was a treasure-trove of folktales and a superb storyteller. Throughout my childhood, I would rest my head on her knees and listen to her rich repertoire of Japanese tales. The stories she told were not specifically for children but rather were oral traditions of actual events that had taken place in the area from which she came.

These included such tales as that of a cat who kidnapped a baby from a farmer's wife, carried it to the top of a tree and raised it. My grandmother told me that when cats disappear, which they often do, they are usually on a quest for knowledge. A wandering cat might dance and play with a master shape changer and learn some magic. Never despise a cat that comes back, she told me, because it may have learned how to change into a human being.

The animals in my grandmother's tales, often cats and foxes, had wisdom and emotions just as we do, and their stories fascinated me. Perhaps that is why I have always felt that insects, plants and even stones have lives of their own. As a child, when I would raise my foot to kick a pebble there were times when I would suddenly find myself inside the stone looking up at myself. "Oh, if she kicks me,

it'll hurt," I would think.

That feeling is still there in the depths of my heart, even though I am now grown up. If I have a love and respect for nature, it is not for nature as something outside of myself but, rather, for the whole universe of which I feel myself a part.

In addition to my grandmother's stories, a rich reading heritage also nourished my soul and shaped my worldview. For centuries, the Japanese people have cherished the pleasure of reading. From the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese translations of books from many languages became widely available. This meant that as a child, I could read not only books by Japanese authors but also those by authors from many different countries. And that is why and how, during my teens, I could encounter those books that were destined to change my life.

I devoured such books as the *Swallows and Amazons* series by Arthur Ransome, Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden*, Alison Uttley's *A Traveler in Time*, Astrid Lindgren's *Bill Bergson detective series*, Barbara Bartos-Höppner's *The Cossacks* and *Save the Khan*, Reginald Ottley's *Boy Alone*, and Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* series. At seventeen, I read *The Children of Green Knowe* and was so captivated by the beauty of that story that I went to visit the author, Lucy M. Boston, in Cambridge. This photo is from that visit. At the time, Mrs. Boston was well over eighty years old.



I loved reading and read many books in translation, but of these, the ones that made the greatest impact on my life were Rosemary Sutcliff's historical novels, such as *Eagle of the Ninth*, *The Lantern Bearers*, and *Knight's Fee*, and J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.

Sutcliff's stories often depict friendship between

young people of different cultural and historical backgrounds.

Eagle of the Ninth vividly captures the deep cultural divide, the gap in social status and the differences in the personal histories of a young Roman centurion named Marcus and a youth from one of the indigenous tribes conquered by the Romans.

The gap between the two was enormous, yet I felt that Sutcliff wrote this story with the vision that such differences can be transcended and bonds of deep and enduring friendship established. This was a great inspiration to me. Our world is inhabited by peoples of such diverse cultures, ethnicities, histories and social circumstances that perhaps conflict is only natural. Nevertheless, Sutcliff's works gave me the hope that we can transcend these differences and peacefully coexist.

I went on to study cultural anthropology at university and to conduct my doctoral fieldwork in Australia, living with the Aboriginal people for many years. For my path in life, I chose to explore the meaning of multicultural coexistence, and Sutcliff's works played a decisive role in my making this choice.



This photo was taken during the early days of my fieldwork. The aboriginal woman pictured here shared many wonderful stories with me.

Like Sutcliff's historical fiction, Tolkien's masterpiece of high fantasy *The Lord of the Rings* also powerfully proclaims the need for tolerant coexistence among diverse peoples as it follows the quest to "discard" a ring made to bind hobbits, dwarves, elves, and humans under a single, absolute value system.

Both these authors swept me into their worlds from the first page of their works. I shared the

agony of Frodo as he wandered Middle Earth and traveled the frontiers of Britain with Marcus. As a teenager, I was enthralled by the power of these stories and longed to write such tales myself.

Stories give us the ability to be someone else.

The moment we open a book, it opens the door to a completely different culture and environment; it gives us the chance to become the protagonist of the tale, to live another's life, to see the world through other eyes and to experience it through other senses.

This is very similar to what I experienced as a child when I found myself sucked inside a pebble and looking up at myself. The power of imagination is what makes this possible. We all possess this ability, every one of us on this planet, so surely we can find some way to walk together in all our diversity.

Books that you just can't put down, tales that make your heart race, stories that make you feel what each character feels, that let you walk beside them to the end and find yourself in a different place from where you started—that is the kind of tale I want to tell. And with that longing in my heart, I will carry on writing.

Thank you so much.

Nahoko Uehashi

Biblioteca de México

10 September 2014

(translation by Cathy Hirano)

Roger Mello 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Award Illustrator Winner



Roger Mello after receiving his medal (© GE Creatividad)

Quiero conectarme con los narradores visuales de este país, de estas muchas naciones que constituyen la cultura de México, Tenochtitlan, Mesoamérica, los pueblos nómadas del Norte, sus textos, su poesía visual me abarcaran a través de su fuerza insondable. El insondable es lo que hace posible mover la creación narrativa, el pensamiento libre de el lector: Mexicas, Mayas, Olmecas tejieran, pintaran, diagramaran y alimentarían el mundo con su ficción de imágenes. En un tiempo en que no era necesario que la ficción se separase de la realidad. El Códice Borbónico, el Calendario Zapoteca, la cerámica, la escritura, los dibujos que cuentan historias, en un mundo-libro de imágenes narrativas abiertas. A los ilustradores y otros artistas de México contemporáneo. Sólo el lector autor subvierte el percurso de la narración.

La niña, el viajero y el libro.
A menina, o viajante e o livro.
The girl, the traveler and the book

“— I like the night. To get in the car and see things pass on the other side of the window. Like thoughts passing inside our heads — only much faster. ‘Over there, a police car! — my dad pointed — ‘We’d better take the Avenida das Nações.’ Are we trying to escape from the police, dad? When did we begin

to flee from the police?’ That night it was just supposed to be a quick ride. ‘It is a ride, daughter.’ It was not and there was a stack of books the same size as me on the left seat, not to mention that gust of wind coming in from the front window.

Clarice speaks, remembering that scene while glimpsing a red and white illustration under the shade. Then she turns to me and to Primo saying nothing. Primo’s home is one of the scariest places in the world. I feel safe in this spot, which is always full of loose newspaper pages on the floor. Scattered pages throughout his whole apartment.... I guess he throws papers away when he looks for some news that can still make sense. Our parents must be really desperate to leave the two of us here alone with Primo.

Always the same thing, a minute before I start to get scared, he tells me about something that I really like: an outstanding French comic book illustrator, or the newest unthinkable scientific discovery, such crazy things that would be sorely missed if they did not exist.

It’s written on a newspaper page somewhere around in this living room...

— but he couldn’t find the article,

— Are you crazy, Primo? — I asked myself in silence, but he seemed to have heard me.

Books in his house do not follow any order; actually entering his apartment is like entering a book. A giant book. A small apartment. And no furniture at all, unlike in everyone else’s home. Primo keeps saying some nonsense over and over:

I wrote it all down on a piece of paper.

I wrote it down so small that I couldn’t find it anymore. Maybe I could find a comic stripe on one of those pages instead.

Clarice is thirsty. I know that look of asking for some water on her face very well.

“Today THE city’s humidity is as low as IN the Sahara desert.”— she reads out loud from the paper.

The lake in our city didn’t exist from the beginning. The river was filled up in such a hurry so that the newborn city would get a lake and not become as dry as it is today.

I figured in my head all that water filling the Paranoá River, flooding many wooden houses and the old Goyazes indigenous cemetery. There wasn’t even enough time to remove the trees from the

bottom. Even today people drown trapped in the webs of the trees in the bottom. I always knew that those trapping webs at the bottom were the guts of a monster swallowing everything.

Primo said he would keep looking for that newspaper article, and then locked himself in his bedroom.

It wasn't Primo who said the lake swallowed books, it was Clarice:

It swallows people too.

Water and books now seem to be part of the same crazy world...

– Do you think the lake also swallowed my dad? – she kept speaking while drawing a lake made out of bones and pages – You knew my dad worked for you know who?

– For who, Clarice?

– For you know who.

– Got it. And you know who were the same ones who had the power to make people and books fade away, weren't they? Remember that relative of mine who disappeared? What was her name?

Clarice asked me not to say it, the name of that relative who used to hide all that books.

–Why not, Clarice?

She was afraid to learn the name and repeat it loud: "Zilah", in the midst of her dreams, "Zilah".

– You know, my dad can hear it.

I did know Clarice's dad worked for you know who. He used to separate and cut scenes from movies that were not supposed to be seen by people. Why didn't he wear a uniform like you know who? I might have seen one picture of him wearing uniform, I don't know, maybe not.

– Did he really watch all those movies, Clarice? So wasn't he the most you know who of them all?

At he beginning he must have hated those movies so much that it was really a pleasure get rid of the scenes. But he spent so much time watching them, can you imagine? I bet he was getting more and more involved with forbidden stuff in such a way that... in such a way that... At the end he kept hidden movies as well as books.

–Did I mention I saw a stack of books the same size as me next to me in the car once?

– Yeah, you've just told me.

– He also had to disappear, isn't it? Maybe the lake?

She has that scary looks right now on her face.

"But it is less scary than water-swallowing books."

To tell the truth, nobody in my family worked for you know who or wore a uniform, but the father of the character in my book, Clarice's dad did.

Clarice took away that piece of my own memory to exist as a character. She stole it from me. But I also stole it, from worried whispered conversations here and there.

Clarice and I have another thing in common: we were both children growing up in Brasília during those years. Brasília, conceived by utopians with modern thoughts. The project of Brasília foresaw an egalitarian city with democratic access to education, basic needs, arts and thought. But it is a planned city. All planned architecture can end up imposing limits on its future inhabitants. Another Clarice, the author Clarice Lispector wrote: "Brasília is built on the horizon. Brasília is artificial. As artificial as it should have been when the world was created. When the world was created, it was necessary to create a man especially for that world."

Brasília was created by visual thinkers, artists, architects, urbanists and educators who were stimulated by the possibility of a project, drawing and redrawing their ideas with a marker pen before coming to a model. It was a dialogue between art and thought. The military government from the 1960s to the early 1980s took power and declared the so-called institutional acts, such as the AI-5, which turned the primary forecast into "architecture of exclusion". The military isolated the ideas of the designers of the city, restricted freedom of thought, confiscated books, suppressed the study of philosophy in the Elementary Schools and Universities. The reading of our generation was affected by this absence of "forbidden literature". People were arrested, tortured, people disappeared just because of possessing "that" book. But the ideas of the designers of the city were still there – in silence, the images, the curved diagrams of the streets and neighborhoods, in the wall art, schools, parks, gardens.

We grew up realizing that books might be really powerful since people could disappear because of them.

We learned to read through the coded visual works of art, we turned ourselves into image readers.

Reading in the silence.

I kept drawing and writing whenever I could.

To draw was to think with the ballpoint pen.

Clarice Lispector came to the inauguration of Brasilia. Aldous Huxley also did. In 1980s the whole generation of late counterculture in Brasilia, including some national rock bands, the composer Renato Russo, were people deprived of books who ran to read Huxley. We first got to the *Brave New World* of Huxley before reaching the Brave New World that Shakespeare's Miranda spoke about in *The Tempest*.

I was always reading plays, books, comics.

In my book *Mangrove Kids* (Meninos do Mangue) the protagonist is the mangrove itself. I learned from Hans Christian Andersen that the landscape can be the protagonist in a conflict leading other characters to a boundary situation between reality and fiction. Reality is fiction – words and pictures are the same thing. The first mangrove I met started at the back of my uncle's house. Mangroves are nurseries without which all sea life ends, but giant coastal cities have turned them into immense waste deposits.

In 2000 the director Adolfo Lachtermacher invited me to Recife to film the documentary *The Crab Cycle*, based on the work of Josué de Castro. I did the art direction, along with Graca Lima. I watched the children that were there. They walked among the mangrove roots like clusters of little fish do, protecting themselves from the madness of adults, who were often stunned because of their drinking and lack of work.

The crab is the first toy for any kid brought up in the mangrove, it's his joke-work, his simulacrum. But I tried not to immerse myself into an ecological or child-labor denunciation aspect. I was interested in a more human mangrove, the people's day-to-day lives in there. But how to talk about it without making any narrative-complaint? Observing the trash among the roots was my way to make narrative out of images. And I started to stick pieces of plastic on paper.

Our town was far from the mangrove, 2,000 kilometers. Alongside the highway, the steaming mud houses resembled modern architecture. It was on our way back home that I saw the charcoal kilns for the first time.

– Are those houses?

– Fire houses, son – my father said.

In my book: *Young Charcoal Burners* (Carvoeirinhos), the narrator is a hornet who changes his point of view to confront the issues of child labor and slave labor. Looking at these issues with horror, and seeing the absolute absurdity of them, could prevent us from seeing the actual boy. In this case, the observer is an animal, who doesn't even understand what a human is. In that way, maybe we can look without any preconceived ideas.

In Brazil, human kind is still touched by nature.

There is still child labor and slave labor; the ecosystem is being destroyed by the production of some commodities, such as pig iron, in Brazil. Some people keep saying that these issues are not children's stuff, but if a child participates in these activities, then it is a child's subject. The images of the facts speak for themselves.

I have to connect with these places and people. Children from different places in the world should be able to identify a house like their own at least once in order that their surroundings may also take part in fairy tales, since not every house in the world has a chimney. I need to be caught by things that some people consider non-commercial or "difficult" or too regional. I confess, I am really not worried if books are going to sell or not, I work with books and plays because there is nothing else I can do.

My fictional universe mainly relates to people outside the economical or unstoppable chain of development. Likewise, I'm interested in species that decline before becoming known in a country known for its abundance. In such a political context of accelerating economical growth, perhaps there is no room for this subtlety of life.

Life can get really subtle sometimes, just think of the smallest existing species of anteater, the tamanduá. He inhabits the unreachable parts of the tallest trees and does not seem to have any function beyond simply existing. And thinking. Animals think with their eyes and whole bodies. Maybe if tamanduá appears as a character in a book, children will get to know him better. Fiction's voice allows it. Without this voice, nobody will hear them.

A highway separates a family of golden lion tamarins in Poço das Antas nature reserve. What chance do they have? Roads need to be built, don't they? To transport pig iron and other things, or to

transport people. The increase in new developmentalism can turn the world into a less challenging place. Creating a world where pragmatism swallows the fiction and the ideas as that lake swallowed books.

Researcher Câmara Cascudo once said something that is present in every culture of the world: "Monkeys are people, too, they just don't talk because they are afraid of being obliged to work". Not being considered human actually humanizes the monkey. As a character, the monkey, or any other animal, becomes human, while humans through that dialogue become once more a part of nature. It is possible both through pictorial and written narratives.

I always avoid transforming pure artistic flow in denunciation-focused art; art cannot be guided by anything but freedom of ideas. I don't want to teach anything. But fictional images in a country that has the largest number of murders of environmental activists might constitute effective activism, too.

You can find a TV in every corner of our country; many people are passionate about television dramas in Brazil. And the companies advertise all unnecessary stuff during commercial time, pushing away free-thinking. Books almost never appear in Brazilian soap operas. Brazilian soap operas mainly show the urban upper-class lifestyle, and life in the suburbs always seem chaotic and full of overacting characters, as well as giving a stereotyped image of the inner cities. It's not a coincidence that almost everyone wants to live in big cities. Narrative images in books can make a change, and they actually do, and we can see what happens to many successful initiatives when we travel around Brazil. Books encourage tolerance by accepting the difference without preconceived ideas or hate, without judging, and through the dialogue with the other. It would be much easier to get to this Utopia through books rather than lowering the age at which teenagers can get arrested.

There is a talk of saturated colors from South America. I've learned that not every color is a 'carnivalization'. Blood is a saturated red that after drying turns black; Ives Klein's blue cobalt, Rothko's blue is the same mineral blue found in the narrative art of the Jequitinhonha Valley in Brazil. Not all artists in the Southern Hemisphere over-do colors. The color itself means nothing. But color is

the interaction with the present, with the now.

And only the present allows a dialogue with memory.

I would like to address these words to all the artists who have had their names suppressed because of the use of an ethnocentric moniker that diminishes them: folk art, naive, spontaneous art. Moreover, I really wish that we never hear these belittling denominations anymore.

Once somebody asked me:

– How might we call these artists then?

– How about calling them by their own names?

– I said: – Noemisa, Galdino, Nino, Adriano.

Their imagery shows an individual fiction, their inner world, their own solitude, their pain.

Children and young adult books incorporate pain. There is no private or separate world for children and adults; despair and pain do not respect age groups. Nor does war.

That fact, which I hold to be true, is revealed also in another book I made: *Zubair and the Labyrinths* (*Zubair e os Labirintos*), about the bombing of Baghdad in 2003 during the Iraq war. Actually it consists of two books, one read from the left to the right, almost with the rhythm of a video game, and shaped like a stand-up divider; the other is a book the boy finds inside the first book, read from right to left. It is a dialogue between the two forms of reading. It's a dialogue between an imaginary world in the past and a written world of today. The architecture of the paper seeks to be as narrative as the illustrations and words.

I once said that I have a notebook to draw and a sketch book to write. Designing dummies allow me to travel into the book. Travel books are my companions either when I am travelling or not. I might do it in a mangrove, at the desert, on Nami Island, in Wild Australasia or in a library.

I could only finish the plot of *John, by a Hair's Breadth* (*João por um fio*), after I had been to the floating islands of Uros on Lake Titicaca. A boy left alone to sleep, under the web of his bedspread. Facing the challenge of passing the night under his blanket that seems to be as big as the whole world. Even though some lullabies and being left all alone at night seems scary, this is the moment when the mother or father give the child one of the most valuable gifts: courage.

In *Contradance*, a girl wants to be a ballerina, just

like her mother who died not too long ago. In order to illustrate this book, I made a putty doll of the girl and sewed an organdy skirt for her. The transposition of the three-dimensional into two-dimensional photos in black and white, gave me a better understanding of the dimensions of the girl. It's strange, some scientists say that the world is really two-dimensional and the idea of depth is an illusion. Fiction not always far apart from science...

Some images get larger than us, don't they?

Like those Carybé drawings in that book

— do you remember? Or the illustrations of that other book that scared me. Later my brother Marcelo said he was afraid of the same drawings. Marcelo, you and I shared the same fear and

fascination for those illustrations, do you remember? Sandra, I now understand what you use to say: it's true that in that planned city of ours, the trees and the buildings grew at the same time that we were growing up. So it seems that we are the same size despite the passage of time. Or maybe it was the town that got smaller and smaller. While writing this, I had a recollection of me and you beneath the corner of the blanket, looking like a giant caterpillar with two heads, as you were reading one of Andersen's books to me.

Roger Mello
Biblioteca de México
10 September 2014

In Memoriam

Maurice Saxby

December 1924—December 2014

DR HENRY MAURICE SAXBY was known affectionately as the 'godfather' of Australian children's literature. Born in 1924, he spoke of the influence of his mother who encouraged a love of reading. After service in World War II, he trained as a teacher and continued studying literature throughout his long life; helped found the Children's Book Council of Australia; and passionately supported the development of school libraries.

Maurice was the foundational scholar of Australian children's literature, publishing in the sixties *A History of Australian Children's Literature* in two volumes; followed in 1993 by *The Proof of the Pudding: Australian Children's Literature 1970–1990*. And then he embarked on revising his earlier histories, volume 1 as *Offered to Children* (1998) and volume 2 as *Images of Australia* (2002). Maurice's many years of teaching in schools, Teachers' Colleges and universities meant that he influenced students



Maurice with his book *Proof of the Pudding* taken at Simmons College, Boston, USA

of every age, from infants to adults. Adult students remember his inspiring lectures and his impish sense of humour, and many who became teachers themselves continue his inspired work, a legacy of more than 60 years. Wherever he went, former students would greet him with 'Maurie, you taught me to know and love books!'

When Ena Noël founded IBBY Australia in the 1960s, Maurice im-

mediately gave support; over the following decades, he provided continuity for succeeding IBBY Australia presidents, and in recent years he gave wise advice and encouragement to Jenni Woodroffe and me and our colleagues. Maurice served as judge for many Australian awards. In addition, in the 1980s he was the only Australian ever to serve as a member of the Hans Christian Andersen award jury. During his time on the jury two Australians, Patricia Wrightson and Robert Ingpen, were winners of the prestigious medal. In April 2014, at an International Children's Book Day event, the 89-year-old Maurice spoke with still-fresh excitement about the dramatic moment when those 1986 awards were announced. He was proud to be the first honorary life member of IBBY Australia. Three weeks before he died, he attended its AGM and participated keenly in all the evening's activities. Maurice was generous in every way to IBBY.

Although he worked tirelessly for the cause of our national literature, writing reviews and articles in its support and launching innumerable books, Maurice also had an interna-

tional outlook. His years as Head of English (and later as Head of School) at Kuring-gai CAE were marked by the visits of many authors and illustrators from around the world. He had a fruitful time in residence at the Munich International Youth Library, and lectured in Britain, Germany, Japan, Canada and the USA. His twinkly eyes became even more twinkly when he spoke of his travels, many with his beloved wife Norma; after her death in 1990 he continued to visit new places. Not only in Australia

but across the world, he will be remembered for his fine scholarship, his inspiring teaching, his encouraging spirit and his gift for friendship.

In the children's literature community, we were preparing to celebrate Maurice's ninetieth birthday, when his sudden death occurred. In January 2015 a memorial event at The University of Sydney (which had recently awarded him an Honorary Doctorate) was attended by 300 people, who wished to honour this great man. For my part, I say farewell

and thank you to a special champion of IBBY, and a beloved mentor and friend.

Dr Robin Morrow AM

National President
IBBY Australia Inc.

Virginia Allen Jensen

September 1927–October 2014

VIRGINIA ALLEN JENSEN was born in Iowa, US, and grew up in a politically active and socially engaged family. In 1953, she married the Danish businessman Flemming Jensen and settled with him in Copenhagen; in 2013 they celebrated their 60th anniversary.

Always interested in language and literature, Virginia became an author of children's books, and the founder and head of the publishing house Ibis and the agency ICBS (International Children's Book Service) in 1962; she was in her late 70s before she reluctantly retired.

Virginia was a pioneer in creating tactile books that blind and non-handicapped children could share, such as *What's that? (Hvad er det? 1978)*, and other picture books that were translated into several languages, some of them illustrated by the Danish Hans Christian Andersen Award-winners Svend Otto S and Ib Spang Olsen, e.g. *Lars-Peter's birthday (Lars-Peters fødselsdag. 1959)*.

As an agent, Virginia promoted Danish authors to foreign publishers – e.g. Cecil Bødker and Bjarne Reuter, respectively winner of the Andersen medal and a two-time Andersen finalist – as well as foreign authors and illustrators worldwide, e.g. Jostein Gaarder, not only European, but also



Virginia Allen Jensen in 2012

from non-European continents and cultures. She was the organizer of the Nordic publishers' presence in Bologna 1972-1996.

Virginia attended most IBBY Congresses, from the one in Rio de Janeiro 1974 to the congress in Copenhagen 2008, and was a member of the board of IBBY Denmark for some time. She prepared many of the dossiers for the Danish Andersen nominations, and organized exhibitions and catalogues, e.g. for the IBBY Congress in Oslo 1988.

She had a high and uncompromising sense of quality, that would always have a higher priority than deadlines, and was a true cosmopolitan networker, committed to the values

and goals of IBBY. Personally, I have known Virginia since 1980 as helpful, generous and caring - a truly lovely person who will be much missed by her family and friends.

To those who wish to know a bit more about Virginia Allen Jensen, I recommend Suzie Yakowicz' article "Danish children's author Virginia Allen Jensen spread reading": <https://suite.io/susie-yakowicz/4tx22y5>

Vagn Plenge

Chair IBBY Denmark

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Would you like to write for IBBY's journal?

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature invites contributions for a special issue exploring global nonsense literature. While all nonsense texts share a grounding in a playful subversion of language and logic, their weft and warp vary widely depending on provenance. From Christian Morgenstern (Germany) to Sukumar Ray (India) to Kirsi Kunnas (Finland), nonsense literature is tied closely to local culture, historical events, artistic tradition, and linguistic interactions. In addition to the exploration of unique manifestations of global nonsense, other topics might include, but are not limited to:

- nonsense arising from political, economic, or cultural upheaval
- colonial and post-colonial reactions, especially to British nonsense hegemony
- performative and/or oral manifestations
- genre debates
- definitions
- cultural and structural fusions
- audience and conceptions of childhood
- pedagogy
- translation
- spiritual connections

Full papers should be submitted to the editor, Björn Sundmark (bjorn.sundmark@mah.se), and guest editor, Michael Heyman (mheyman@berklee.edu). Please see *Bookbird's* website at www.ibby.org/bookbird for full submission details. Papers which are not accepted for this issue will be considered for later issues of *Bookbird*.

Our forthcoming issues:

53.3 (2015) Nonsense

53.4 (2015) Open Themed

54.1 (2016) Indigenous Children's Literature

54.2 (2016) HCA

54.3 (2016) Auckland Congress

54.4 (2016) Open & HCA Winners and Shortlist

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature invites contributions for a special issue exploring Indigenous Children's Literature from around the world. While studies like Clare Bradford's germinal *Unsettling Narratives* examines First Nations' issues in texts by Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, this issue welcomes articles that focus on texts for children and young adults by Indigenous/Native/Aboriginal/First Nations authors. Topics might include, but are not limited to:

- nations within and across nations
- decolonization and survivance
- orality and storytelling
- history and context
- formation of identity
- borders and journeys
- place and the natural world
- spirituality and sacred folkways
- origin stories and the trickster figure
- tribal politics and sovereignty
- community and culture

Full papers should be submitted to the editor, Björn Sundmark (bjorn.sundmark@mah.se), and guest editor, Roxanne Harde (rharde@ualberta.ca), by 1 July 2015. Please see *Bookbird's* website at www.ibby.org/bookbird for full submission details. Papers which are not accepted for this issue will be considered for later issues of *Bookbird*.

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