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Editor: Björn Sundmark, Malmö University, Sweden.
Address for submissions and other editorial correspondence: bjorn.sundmark@mah.se.
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Editorial

AS I WRITE THIS EDITORIAL, the Paris talks on climate change have just closed. The commentators are optimistic; maybe there is hope for the planet after all. Yet from my December horizon in southern Sweden, I am reminded on a daily basis that the autumn temperatures have never in a hundred years been so high. "Winter is not coming," to paraphrase a well-known series. And closer to the polar regions, the situation is even worse. There, the thawing permafrost and diminishing icecaps have already harmed or altered the ecology drastically. The flora and fauna, as well as the people there, are living under increasing pressure. One can only wonder how this will affect the way of life and culture of the indigenous peoples. Of course, minorities and Indigenous populations already struggle to maintain their unique cultural and historical characteristics in the face of majority culture and globalization, but what is happening now is an ecological sea change (literally); it threatens the material and ecological foundations of those cultures especially.

This issue of *Bookbird* focuses on Indigenous children's literature. The cover is from *Arctic Stories* by the author Michael Kusugak (discussed in one of the articles) and illustrator Vladyana Krykorka. The illustration—with the Inuit girl, the huskies, the snow and ice—can serve as a reminder of a world and way of life that may be rapidly vanishing. All peoples should of course have the right to choose and shape their own future: to adopt and embrace the new, but also to choose what to keep of the old ways. However, when the world is damaged, such options are reduced—and most drastically for those who are the least to blame. Thus, to me the illustration also serves as inspiration to continue the fight against global warming. Maybe this is what the girl is telling the black bookbird on the cover; maybe she is sending us a message.

But these are just my private musings. Roxanne Harde, who I welcome back to *Bookbird* as guest editor for this issue, provides a critical yet personal introduction to the theme, where she draws on her own extensive work and research into Indigenous children's books.

In her overview, she comments on the themed texts: three articles, a Letter, and an essay in the Children & Their Books section.

I am also happy to announce that yet another Bookbird editor *emerita*, Barbara Lehman, makes a comeback in this issue in the capacity of Postcard editor. As usual, there is also a full review section (the "Books on Books") collected and edited by Christiane Raabe and Jutta Reusch of the International Youth Library in Munich. Liz Page reports from the wide world of IBBY. In the Letter section, we find Nita Berry writing on the topic "Social Change through Children's Books—An Indian Perspective." And finally, a text that I have slotted, tongue in cheek, under the heading "Dogs & Their Books"—an essay by Helene Ehriander on a project with "reading education assistance dogs," or "Book Dog."

In other words, there is much to read in this issue of *Bookird* for human and canine alike.

Björn Sundmark

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*.

Introduction

Putting First Nations Texts at the Center

Roxanne Harde

For more than thirty years, I have been paying close attention to Indigenous children's literature (meaning books about or for Indigenous children), generally in the representations of First Nations peoples in literature for children and young adults and specifically in literature for young people written by Native authors. There were a number of particular reasons for my interest: First, there are people from the Sweetgrass Cree Nation in my family, and I wanted books for my daughter that represented Indigenous people in realistic and non-colonialist ways. Then, while I was earning a baccalaureate and preparing for graduate school, I worked as a children's and young adult librarian/library technician for a rural school division in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Prince Albert was one of the first urban centers in Canada to attain a majority Indigenous population, and I needed the collections in my care to reflect the experiences of the division's many Native students. And then, while writing my Master's thesis, I free-lanced as a library consultant for the Little Red River School, north of Prince Albert. A joint effort of the Montreal Lake and Lac La Ronge Cree Nations, the school is K to 12 and built in the outline of an eagle. I selected the books, catalogued them, trained the teacher-librarian, and weeded the existing collections that were gathered from the various schools owned by the bands. My undergraduate in Native Studies minor served me well: I knew what to keep (those rare books that presented Indigenous peoples without bias or stereotyping) and what to discard (those hundreds of books that would not serve Little Red River's children and young adults well). Week after week, I filled the recycling bins to overflowing with the discards. I dumped books by well-meaning white people who appropriated Indigenous lives and culture and created Native protagonists who were more objects of social studies than fully developed subjects. Think of it this way: when a story is written about a white child, the child is seen as an individual, so the Native child as individuated subject became the basis of my criteria for the collection. Therefore, I discarded those stories about the Native child that used that child to stereotype, moralize, generalize, and objectify—to write about a nation, a people, instead of about a child. So out went books like *Whale Brother*, which bears no relation to Inuit life; *The Indian in the Cupboard*, which is repellant for so many reasons; and the many books by Byrd Baylor, which are beautifully illustrated but misguided and misleading. And I happily binned that most heinous of all: The Little House on the Prairie series by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Her novels, I think, have done as much to damage North American First Nations as any colonial enterprise, military and otherwise.

In order to build the library, I spent dozens of hours online and on the phone searching for appropriate materials. A major help was Doris Seale (Santee Dakota/Cree) and Beverly Slapin's *Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children* published in 1987. Some of the books on my daugh-

ter's bookshelves I kept or acquired for the Little Red River School, and some of those were books by cultural outsiders or what Clare Bradford terms "settler-society texts." One good example is the work of Canadian children's librarian Peter Eyvindson. Through the 1980s and 1990s, he published several picture books focusing on everyday issues in contemporary children's lives, and most have Native people in them—particularly *Red Parka Mary, Jen and the Great One, Kookum's Red Shoes*, and *Kyle's Bath.* In Eyvindson's stories, Indigenous children can find themselves and their community depicted in positive and human ways in a variety of settings, urban, rural, and reserve.

So, though my nominal purpose for this special issue was to collect articles and columns that examined literature for children about Indigenous subjects by Indigenous authors, I am abidingly open to work about First Nations peoples and experiences by non-Native writers and illustrators. As Lydia Kokkola points out in her Letter in this issue, "An 'Invisibling' View of a Northern Landscape: Inga Borg's Plupp Series," while Borg's series addresses the dearth of books for children featuring Sweden's Indigenous peoples, the Sámi, that alone does not explain its ongoing popularity. Kokkola examines why Borg's books—which, like Eyvindson's, include Native and non-Native peoples and have a variety of settings—have been so well received by the Sámi, and she focuses on the ways in which Borg privileges and honors Sámi worldviews and traditions.

Still, as I worked to fill the shelves of the Little Red River School Library, I bought everything I could find by First Nations authors, and a good deal of what I was acquiring—by what I now think of as the first- and second-generations of Indigenous writers for children—were stories grounded in the oral tradition: retellings of histories, reworkings of legends, recuperations of origin stories. Indigenous people have been writing, compiling, and publishing texts for children for over a century now, when Zitkala-Ša (Sioux) gathered and retold stories from her tribe's oral tradition in *Old Indian Legends* (1901). In Canada, her contemporary, E. Pauline Johnson/Tekahionwake (Mohawk), also published Native stories, though not from her own tribe, in *Legends of Vancouver* (1912). Since the 1960s, many Indigenous authors have followed the example of these women and their contemporaries and reworked narratives from their oral traditions into picturebooks, short stories, novels, and plays for young readers. Joseph Bruchac (Mohawk) was among the first and is still one of the most important of them. By the late 1990s, I was able to acquire books by these authors for the school division and the Little Red River School, and many more by writers such as Thomas King (Cherokee) and Michael and Kathleen Lacapa (Apache/Mohawk). These texts were not often sold by the "jobbers" who I regularly used for acquisitions, so I had to get creative and search for the small presses with Indigenous authors and illustrators in their catalogues. Oyate Press became an important source, as did the Children's Book Press—a non-profit publisher based in San Francisco. Through them, I found the picture book *A Man Called Raven* by Dene author Richard Van Camp, who is from the Northwest Territories. Illustrated by George Littlechild, Van Camp's picture book makes clear how powerful contemporary retellings of stories from the oral tradition can be and how these stories offer transformative and enabling ways to understand traditional First Nations social, cultural, and political practices. If, as Leslie Marmon Silko says, the only way to seek justice is through the power of stories, then stories from the oral tradition seemed the right foundation on which to build the Little Red River School's collection. These stories have since proved to be the right matrix in which to root the undergraduate and graduate courses I have taught for the past dozen years, and they are now the background for my current research projects.

It is therefore not surprising that First Nations oral traditions center the articles and columns in this special issue on Indigenous literature for children. In "A Filipino Grandmother Grimm: Subversion of Foreign Fairy Tales through Indigenization and Cultural Appropriation in Mga Kuwento ni Lola Basyang (The Stories of Grandmother Basyang)," Rhoda Garces-Bacsal, Ruanni Tupas, and Jesus Federico Hernandez examine the strategies of decolonization embedded in S*tories of Lola Basyang,* a series of indigenized Filipino fairy tales. Retold by radical playwright Severino Reyes in Tagalog in order to reach a wide audience, these stories—as Garces-Bacsal, Tupas, and Hernandez demonstrate—are reconfigured with local elements and indigenized to redefine Filipino identity and serve as a subtle critique of the contemporary interlocking economic, cultural, and sociopolitical conditions and structures. These au-

thors work to recuperate the stories of Lola Basyang from their colonial moorings and, by reframing them as Filipino oral tradition, recognize their subversive aspects.

As Indigenous literature for children has become a well-established part of publishing for children, the critical conversation surrounding this work is growing stronger. In 2005, Doris Seale (Santee Dakota/Cree) and Beverly Slapin followed *Through Indian Eyes* with *A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children*—another fine collection of academic articles, personal essays, poetry, and reviews of children's books about First Nations people written by dozens of teachers, scholars, and parents; the vast majority of them are Indigenous. Reviews in both books are rigorous, though given how fully I agree with them, I may be biased. Pam Martell (Ojibwe) offers a glowing review of Canadian author-teacher Peter Eyvindson's picture books, and Dennis McAuliffe (Osage) details the historical inaccuracies in The Little House on the Prairie series and suggests that the Osage people should have dismembered Laura Ingalls when they had the chance (50). The book includes several review essays, and Seale's consideration of Paul Goble's work is especially revelatory. She details the inaccuracies in his work, his self-serving author notes, his arrogant appropriation of creation stories, and his assumption—given his frequent claims that he writes "primarily with Indian children in mind"—that Indigenous people have lost their traditions, histories, and cultural practices which he must now teach them (160).

Seale and Slapin's books should be seen as foundational in the growing body of scholarly literature on this field, but they are rarely referenced, in part, I suspect, because the editors position themselves as educational activists rather than as scholars. As one example, in her germinal study *Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature,* Clare Bradford cites Seale's other essay on Goble but neither of these collections. Bradford's critique of Goble is far more measured; though she comes to his defense regarding his use of Iktomi, the Lakota trickster figure, she is highly critical of his narrative strategies—in particular, the position of authority he assumes on all things Native American. Noting that Goble overlooks unequal discursive power relations in his works, Bradford argues "the authority and influence of the white author is [sic] disproportionately greater than the capacity of Native Americans to represent themselves" (30). Overall, *Unsettling Narratives* reads post-1980 texts by both settler-society and Indigenous authors to discover how they position child readers as citizens of postcolonial nations. Bradford's dual focus on language as a site of resistance as well as a mode of representation and on the significance of place as a marker of national and racial politics is both astute and relevant. Still, statements that undermine "the capacity of Native Americans to represent themselves" disregard exactly the body of work I have been searching for and studying for three decades: books written for children and young adults by Native peoples that purposefully represent themselves, their histories, traditions, and contemporary life.

As does Bradford's, there are many studies that compare First Nations and settler texts: One example is Michelle Pagni Stewart, who reads Louise Erdrich's historical novels for children as a response to Wilder's Little House on the Prairie series. There is a growing body of work focused solely on texts for children by First Nations people. Angeline O'Neill, for example, compares works by Michael Kusugak (Inuit) and Lorna Little (Nyoongar) to show how the integration of oral and written traditions appeals to children and adults. Michaela Moura-Kocoglu surveys Indigenous children's picture books to conclude that "there is growing awareness that fiction for the young contributes to an understanding of contemporary indigenous realities" (321). Similarly, Doris Wolf and Paul DePasquale survey 300 Canadian Aboriginal picture books to find that 70% of them were fiction and the rest were "retellings of traditional tales" (87). They note, "there are traces of the legacy of colonialism in these works that can problematize a simple portrayal of Aboriginal tradition and offer ... a glimpse of the violent and complicated history of North American within a framework that emphasizes hope and renewal" (103). *Bookbird's* editor, Björn Sundmark, and I are hopeful that this issue will help to further the complicated critical conversations about books for children by Indigenous authors; there is a good deal at stake, both for Indigenous and settler societies around the world.

In 2014, panelists on Canada Reads, the CBC's (Canada's public radio) popular literary debate program, were charged with this task: choose one novel that will change our nation. They chose *The Orenda*

by Joseph Boyden (Anishinaabe). While it may not change overnight how settler-culture Canadians understand First Nations peoples, the novel goes some distance in bringing to light the beauty and complexity of tribal societies before contact with Europeans. To my mind, the books that actually could "change our nation" are the stories written for children and young adults by First Nations authors. Children's texts are cultural artifacts with epistemological orientations that make them mediators of knowledge. They shape children's focus and expose them to particular explanations about the world. The power and promise of literature for young people lies in its ability to both instruct and delight its audience by teaching them histories (and her-stories), enabling them to hear voices that are too often silenced, entertaining them, and allowing them to find their way to understanding even the most complex situations. In the Native North American context, those situations are often rooted in the long-term effects of colonialism. What happens, I want to know, when we put stories for children and young adults by First Nations people about Native experience, history, and tradition at the center, rather than at the periphery? In this issue, that question is partially addressed by Judith Leggatt's "Suicide Prevention in Nêhiyawi (Cree) Comic Books." Leggatt traces the ways in which Indigenous authors and illustrators respond to the epidemic of suicide infecting Indigenous youth. Arguing that the formal conjunction of oral storytelling and graphic novel in two of these comics demonstrates the necessity of bringing Nêhiyawi history and tradition into the contemporary world, Leggatt shows how the interaction between these traditional and contemporary genres parallels the relationships between the communal and the individual that are seen as necessary for health in First Nations communities. As they connect new narratives in new genres to the oral tradition, these comics, Leggatt points out, connect individual autonomy to communal health.

Lisa Brooks, an Abenaki theorist, demands that critical writing be "an activity of sustenance, transformation, and conversation" (237), and Leggatt relies in part on Indigenous critics in her study. It seems fitting to craft a method of reading these texts that is focused on participatory engagement with them and their worldviews and that is grounded in the traditions and concerns of North American First Nations people. Approaches to these texts, it seems to me, should be much like my methods of stocking the shelves of the Little Red River School Library, with a tribal-centered focus and through processes of discursive action. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngati Awa/Ngati Porou) sets out ethical research protocols, which "are as much about personal integrity as they are about collective responsibility and as much about research as they are about education and other forms of engagement" (125). We may be dealing "only" with texts for children, but those texts can be seen as the heart of Native survivance, self-determination, recovery, and development; approaches to them must be respectful, reciprocal, and relational. In "Felt Knowledge in Michael Kusugak's Picturebooks," Kathleen Forrester and Judith Saltman employ exactly that type of approach in their discussion of the relationship between lived experience, emotion, and knowledge production embedded in Inuit author and storyteller Michael Kusugak's picture books. Drawing on Dian Million's (Tanana Athabascan) work on felt theory to argue that Kusugak's picture books perform political acts, Forrester and Saltman demonstrate how these books reaffirm Inuit cultural identity and autonomy. Erin Spring's column, "'Everyone Here Knows a Junior': Blackfoot Children and Their Books," begins with the same respectful and relational approaches, but works with young adults and their texts in an ongoing study. Spring discusses the early stages of her participatory, reader-response research with First Nations youth living on a Blackfoot reserve in Alberta. Spring's work traces the ways in which young readers reflect on their social, cultural, and place-based identities while reading culturally relevant, local fiction. Her column outlines the methodological design of her project, which includes forming reading discussion groups, the creation of place-journals, and the process of finding suitable research texts.

The overarching goal of the essays and columns in this issue is to analyze the ways in which First Nations writing for children works to decolonize the Aboriginal world. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (Chippewa) outlines three actions necessary for the project of decolonization: First Nations people must resist the marginalization of their communities by moving "into the structured world of formal mainstream schooling" in order to "direct the transition and ultimate transformation of [their] families and communities" (28). I suggest that Native people have

been making this move for quite some time through a variety of discursive practices, but for Native texts, such studies are necessary to bring this discourse fully into the mainstream, as Wesley-Esquimaux desires: "instead of telling only the stories about trauma and victimization and pain, let us talk about our survival and our undeniable strengths" (28). This issue brings into conversation with each other a variety of texts that emphasize First Nations sovereignty and the holistic and rejuvenating models of socio-cultural structures they offer. Finally, Wesley-Esquimaux argues for continued visible social and political action, both inside and outside First Nations communities, particularly in terms of educating our next generations. She looks for ways to show how Indigenous people can decolonize their homes: "talking to our children, our partners, and our families, and connecting with them; telling them about historic and personal lies and about the beauty of our cultural and social truths. ... talking to our children as the ancestors used to do, before contact and the subjugation of women, before religious guilt and patriarchy took over, before ... the dominant culture took over" (30). The contributors to this issue are studying books that talk to children—from both Indigenous and settler peoples—in exactly those ways, and their research brings to light how these texts can matter to children at home and in the classroom.

roxanne harde is Professor of English and Associate Dean (Research) at the University of Alberta—Augustana. She researches American women's writing and children's literature using cultural studies approaches. Her work has appeared in several journals, including *Women's Writing, Jeunesse, The Lion and the Unicorn, Legacy, Critique, International Research in Children's Literature,* and *Mosaic,* and in several edited collections, including *Enterprising Youth.*

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Felt Knowledge in Michael Kusugak's Picture Books

Kathleen Forrester and Judith Saltman

Those whose subjective history this is must speak it,
since its emotional resonance still lives through them, because we are
who we are because of this history that
continuously haunts our storied bodies and lands (Million)

In this paper, we examine a range of picture books by Inuk[1] author and storyteller Michael Kusugak. We consider the ways that the embodied emotional and cultural knowledge of Kusugak's lived experience resonate throughout his stories, opening space for a renegotiation of history from an Indigenous, specifically Inuit, perspective. Merging memoir, fiction, and traditional narratives, we argue that Kusugak's stories engage in *political acts* as they privilege felt experiences as integral to community knowledges, thereby challenging Canadian settler "truths" while strategically negotiating and reaffirming Inuit cultural identity from within the picture book modality.

Doris Wolf and Paul DePasquale, in "Home and Native Land," observe that Indigenous-authored picture books for children tend toward the idyllic, avoiding the overtly political "anger and siege mentality" of Native fiction written for young adult and adult audiences[2] (91), and yet, they assert, a strategic reader can actively seek out the protest and resistance of these books by choosing to focus on the historical and secular elements. Such a broadened lens—which moves beyond the singularity of reading only for myth, spirituality, and tradition—enables a more nuanced treatment of contemporary Indigeneity without falling back onto the essentialist nineteenth century notion of "native culture as static" (102). In turning to Kusugak's picture books, then, we actively seek to read the ways in which these texts employ a wide range of counter-discursive tactics as a means to interpolate and interrogate Canada's dominant discourses surrounding contemporary Inuit lives and ways. Specifically, we are interested in how Kusugak writes his own subjective history into all his stories in one way or another—drawing on embodied knowledge to speak to collective experiences—and we are curious about the interfusional strategies he uses to do so. Our approach is twofold: first, we consider the form of the picture book, as appropriated by Kusugak, in a multi-generic, intercultural project that draws upon oral traditions and illustration to expose, rupture, and rewrite stereotypes about Inuit and Northern life; second, we look to the power of telling "alternative

histories" (Bradford 100; Million 64) to disrupt and complicate settler narratives for the non-Inuit reader and to provide hope and renewal to Inuit readers and their communities.

As we read Kusugak's picture books, we are informed by Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million's Indigenous feminist approach to knowledge as *felt.* In "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," Million—speaking for and about Indigenous Canadian women writers[3]—asserts "we *feel* our histories as well as think them" (54) and insists that feelings be understood as theory, as "culturally mediated knowledges" (61) that are central to the work of decolonization within academia and more broadly. As Million makes clear, such an epistemological valuing of "felt" knowledge does not sit easily within traditional Western scholarship, in which the presiding assumption—that there is one knowable reality and that the nature of this knowledge is objective (Chilisa 40)—contrasts strikingly with Indigenous research/knowledge paradigms wherein reality is recognized to be socially constructed, multiplicit, and contingent upon the web of connections "that humans have with the environment, the cosmos, the living, and the non-living" (40). With this in mind, and acknowledging that both authors of this paper are from settler societies and are thus cultural outsiders to the texts we consider, we engage in an integrative approach to reading Indigenous literature as outlined by Coast Miwok/Pomo/Jewish critic Greg Sarris, in which "understanding and not control is the goal of critical discourse and this understanding is dynamic, dialogic in nature" (153). As such, we approach the picture books of Michael Kusugak with the aim not so much to draw conclusions as to continue a dialogue. Within this dialogue, beyond the usual inclusion of the primary and secondary texts, we include excerpts from an interview Judith Saltman conducted with Michael Kusugak,[4] thereby privileging his authorial voice as one of the discourses that shape the heteroglot conversation of this paper. While Kusugak notes that "there is something autobiographical in every one" of his picture books (Interview), due to space limitations, we focus on five texts (all illustrated by Vladyana Krykorka) that best exemplify the discursive ways these books perform political acts through drawing on felt knowledge.

"I partly made it up and it was partly a true story": The Politics of Mixed-genre, Intercultural, and Oral Picture books

Michael Kusugak is one of many Canadian Indigenous authors who, in recent decades, have turned to the Western literary form of the picture book as a means to "alter the ethnocentrism of Canada and to bring hope and healing to their communities" (Wolf and DePasquale 90). Kusugak's career as a children's author began in 1988 when he co-authored *A Promise Is a Promise* with Robert Munsch.[5] Now considered "Classic Munsch," *A Promise Is a Promise* is not, in many ways, prototypical of Kusugak's subsequent picture books: with its linear plot; reliance upon Western literary tropes; and limited descriptive detail pertaining to land, animals, and daily life, this first text only hints at the complex and hybrid orality of Kusugak's work to come. It does, nonetheless, set the tone for Kusugak's ensuing publications in its employment of the picture book as a multi-generic form that rests upon his own (and a collective) felt experience. Interweaving an Inuit traditional story[6]—a cautionary tale about the Qallupilluit who live under the sea ice waiting to snatch children who venture too close to the edge—with a "made-up" story, *A Promise Is a Promise* draws upon Kusugak's affectual childhood memory of being "scared of these creatures" (Interview). He tells, "One day all these bubbles started to come up

out of the cracks in the ice. We were sure they [the Qallupilluit] were coming to grab us."

By telling stories that are "partly made...up" and "partly...true" (Interview), Kusugak eschews the boundaries of Western genre-based classification, strategically situating tradition within the flexible and changing realm of contemporary experience and subjective memory and, thus, collapsing the settler fantasy of a purely historicized Indigeneity. Accordingly, these picture books engage in the political act of "writing back" to, and resisting, the myriad of appropriated traditional stories, myths, and legends that have been retold and illustrated by non-Indigenous authors and illustrators under the banner of multicultural children's literature.[7]

Kusugak's second book, *Baseball Bats for Christmas* (1990), based upon his childhood memories of Christmas in Repulse Bay in 1955, is full of particular details shown through child's logic in which a distinction is not claimed between colonial and Inuit traditions but, rather, the one is incorporated into the other. Christmas trees, Cowboys, the Union Jack, and the Hudson's Bay Company Store—each a powerful symbol of Southern colonizing forces—are part of the children's day-to-day world, and all are treated to a signification shakedown in ways

that belie a singular reading of Inuit experience. When the protagonist Arvaarluk's father successfully lassoes a wild dog, it is ironically attributed to "the hours and hours [he] had spent playing *cowboy*" (italics added, n. p.). Similarly, the children express *delight* when the Union Jack (the Canadian flag prior to 1965) goes up the flagpole in front of the Hudson's Bay Company Store, as for them it signifies the imminent arrival of an aeroplane, supplies, and their hero—the bush pilot, Rocky Parsons. Perhaps the greatest semiotic textual joke, as suggested by the title, concerns the six "standing ups" (n.p.), a gift of Christmas trees from the Canadian government that the children repurpose into baseball bats, generating a new, culturally specific, *and* hybridized Christmas tradition.

As Kusugak details the intercultural world of his childhood, he forecloses any readerly attempt to create an image of the "authentic" or "untouched" Inuit or to limit contemporary Indigenous experience to an overly simplified paradigm of victimology. The complex interfusion of cultures at play within the story and the strong focalized viewpoint of the child-Inuit subject complicate the centre/margin approach to history found in Western discourses. This is not to say that the dynamics of power are put to one side; quite the contrary, this text has a corrosive irony that shrewdly disrupts familiar patterns of interpretation, humorously turning "seemingly self-evident representations of colonial power... on their heads—and against themselves" (Gruber 33) and opening space for alternative truths, based on affectual knowledge, to rewrite history.

Kusugak's picture books strategically straddle the narrative styles and languages of both Inuktitut (his first language) and English (the language he learned after being removed from his family to residential school). While his stories are predominantly told in English, they are layered with Inuktitut words and expressions to describe and name animals, plants, and the phenomena of Arctic earth and sky, grounding the texts within a continuance of cultural knowledges for the Inuit reader, while firmly resisting assimilation from cultural outsiders.[8] Similarly, the orality of his writing (the detailed and descriptive non-linear building of story in which multiple paragraphs will often fill a single page) is anchored in what Pelagie Owlijoot describes as "the Inuit way of telling stories," wherein the absence of "visual

information or colourful storybooks" leaves listeners free to engage their imaginations (cited in Martin 13) and reflects Kusugak's own sense that "a mark of a good storyteller is the way he can put pictures in your [the reader's] mind; illustrations...are just extra" (Interview). This may seem like a curious sentiment from a writer who chooses to publish in a form that, by its very nature, tells a story from both a verbal and visual plane, and yet, as Robin McGrath suggests, a consideration of the concept of "illustration" from a widened perspective illuminates the possibility that, in many ways, Inuit storytelling has always involved illustrative and decorative practices such as "facemaking, body-movement, songs and string games as well as drawings and puppets" (10). Thus, picture book illustrations might be considered powerful companions to contemporary Inuit storytelling, rich sites of visual knowledge woven into the fabric of oral literacy (Grace 33); indeed, in Kusugak's case, the distinctive illustrations of Czech-born, Canadian picture book artist Vladyana Krykorka do bring another composite layer to the already heterogeneous world of his stories, contributing to the overall political schemata of the picture books.

Over many years of friendship and collaboration, Kusugak and Krykorka have come to effectively exploit the potential for dialogic play between word and image to create layered and semiotically complex stories. Perhaps the best example of this is the more recently published *The Littlest Sled Dog* (2008), a humorous commentary on representation and appropriation that engages directly with prevalent stereotypes and attitudes toward the North that are fabricated in the Southern imagination. In this self-referential, intertextual, and satirical picture book, the focalizing character of Igvillu (a scruffy Cairn Terrier born in Red Deer, Alberta) comes face to face with her romanticized "dream" of becoming an Arctic sled-dog when she is taken to live in the Northern community of Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. In the penultimate illustration, we see Igvillu (following a harrowing encounter with a "real" Husky) sitting on a couch with her storyteller master (Krykorka's clear reference to Kusugak situated among the contemporary details of his home life), watching *The Wizard of Oz*. The screen reflects the familiar image of the movie-star terrier "Toto" next to Dorothy's ruby-slippered feet—a kind-of metonymical mirror for the whole text, in which one-dimensional stereotypes are exposed as extensions of desire. By recontextualizing conventional images from popular culture and juxtaposing these with Igvillu's naive and appropriative dreams that never quite "come true," the settler-reader is positioned to face their own fantasies, built upon colonial meta-narratives, about Inuit and the North. For the Inuit reader, imagination is embraced as a flexible and affective site of knowledge production from which to reaffirm and renew cultural identity.

Krykorka's illustrations, distinct with mottled inks and vibrant washes, have met with some controversy. Her expressionistic, stylized realism is heavily influenced by the Czechoslovakian culture of Eastern European book illustration with which she grew up, and while her multiple visits to the Arctic and ongoing research have contributed to illustrations that display an increasingly nuanced treatment of the Northern landscape and the specificities of Inuit lives and ways, her earliest works, complete with apple-cheeked smiling children, can be read as sentimentalized folk-art. For some critics, this introduces a "problematic tension" (Edwards and Saltman, "Looking at Ourselves"), dislocating the stories from the particularities of place and experience contained within Kusugak's words. This disjuncture between visual and verbal representation could be viewed as counteractive to the political work of Kusugak's felt narratives, reinforcing stereotypes within the cultural outsider's imagination and marginalizing Inuit readers. On the other hand, one could read this same disjuncture as a site of opening: a dialogic breaking point emblematic of the kind of rupturing that can occur when a text is deliberately situated at the intersections of cultural and generic expectations, infiltrating dominant discourses and allowing seemingly competing ideologies to co-exist. In this regard, we see the illustrations as another discursive layer that challenges the reader to move beyond an essentialist and dichotomous worldview and engage with the possibility of complex, subjective truths.

"I was there, I was hauled away": The "Alternative History" of Felt Experience

In the epigraph to this paper, we quoted Dian Million speaking of the "emotional resonance" of history. "We are who we are," she writes, "because

of this history that continuously haunts our storied bodies and lands" (72). In this section of the paper, we consider the ways that Michael Kusugak imbues his picture books with the "emotional resonance" of his own subjective history, a kind of felt knowledge that speaks to collective pain as well as hope in order to engage with and help make sense of contemporary experiences for a "new generation of Inuit" in relevant terms (Martin 63). Kusugak's fourth picture book, *Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails* (1993), emerged from a personal and community need for "some kind of vehicle by which people would start talking" about the youth suicide crisis in the North in the 1990s[9] (Interview). With sensitive intuition, Kusugak approaches this topic indirectly, writing a story that, he says, tries to "capture the essence of how we deal with the pain of the death of a loved one" through turning to the culturally relevant and tangible phenomena of the northern lights. *Northern Lights* explores the emotional life of Kataujaq, who falls into a deep depression when her mother gets sick and is sent away "way down south in an aeroplane" never to return. Krykorka's illustrations are both accessible and emotionally specific; a portrait of Kataujaq in bed consumed by grief is one of the few illustrations in Kusugak's picture books to show pain and despair, and yet, the "universality" of such emotion is undercut by the cultural framing of the photographed decorative beadwork[10] accompanying the verbal text on each page, drawing attention to the Inuit specific (recent) history in which this story is situated.

While *Northern Lights* has been celebrated on a national scale as a child-appropriate story about depression and coping with loss, it explicitly speaks to the profound impact of the northern tuberculosis epidemic of the 1950s on Inuit communities—when thousands of sick were taken from their families to hospitals in the South, often to die without their families ever finding out what happened (Kral 312). This occurred during the "government era" of the 1950s and 1960s (Wenzel, cited in Kral 311)—a time of "swift and harsh" change, in which Inuit were forced off the land and into settlements and children were removed from families to residential schools, cumulating in a sudden and devastating breakdown of kin and affinal relationships (Kral 311–312) and initiating deep personal and collective trauma among Inuit that would impact generations to come. It is profoundly important, then, that *Northern Lights*, a picture book born of a contemporary need for a culturally relevant "vehicle" to talk about the ongoing epidemic of suicide amongst Inuit youth, should result in an exploration of the colonial roots of contemporary pain, echoing the words of Sarah Ahmed that "the past lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present" (33).

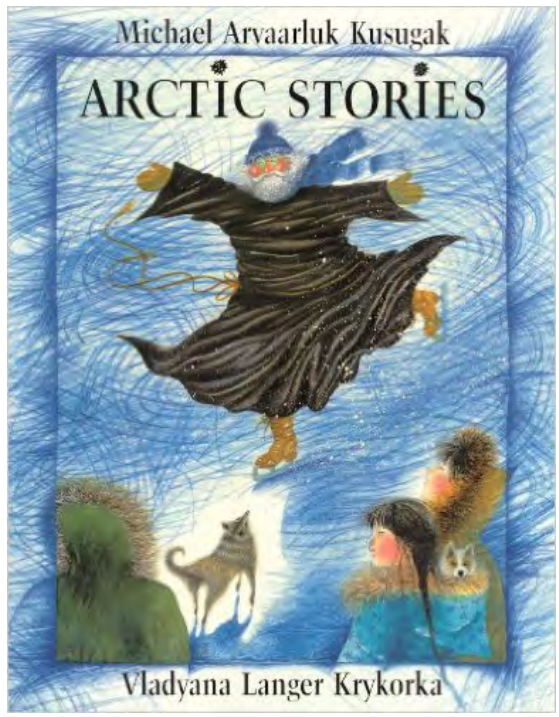
In the closure of the narrative, Kataujaq's grandmother shares a consoling story about the spirits of the dead playing soccer as they did in life. The northern lights, Kataujaq's grandmother tells her, are the "trails" left by the dead as they chase a giant walrus-head soccer ball across the night sky. On the final page, Kusugak addresses the reader directly, inviting them to also look to the night sky and "see someone special whom you thought had gone away forever," and thus we see on a very palpable level the political work of Kusugak's writing—as he links the present with the past, he also encourages the reader to dismantle oppositional barriers in their own perception between objective reality and spiritual knowledge, between "new" and "old" ways of knowing and being. Through calling upon the specifics of Inuit cultural-geographical knowledges, embedded within the strength of intergenerational relations, *Northern Lights* is a picture book that pushes against and ruptures the binary worldview of dominant empirical knowledge systems in order to open up regenerative possibilities for future generations.

Million notes that an important discursive shift occurred in the 1980s in Canada when Indigenous women began to share their lived experiences of residential schools with one another, their families, and communities, telling "truths that challenged Canadian settler truths" through stories that existed as alternate histories (64). By the 1990s, this shift was such that personal accounts of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse at the hands of church and state in residential schools had become part of the public and judicial domain across Canada. Significantly, this was also the time when Kusugak was writing his own alternate histories in picture book form, and in 1998, he produced the semi-autobiographical *Arctic Stories*—three linked narratives set in 1958 that follow ten-year-old Agatha as she lives and travels with family and community on the tundra around Repulse Bay and then (in the final story) is flown

south to residential school in Chesterfield Inlet (the same school Kusugak was taken to when he was six). Part of the political work of these three stories is the steady dismantling of the Western meta-narrative of "history's heroes" that takes place as Agatha is positioned in the unlikely role of hero. In the first story, she is cheered by her community for "saving the day" after she scares away an unknown flying black thing (a helium airship as revealed in the prologue) by yelling "GO AWAY YOU UGLY BLACK THING" (14). In the second story, Agatha watches the many summer birds of the North come and go, and learns from her grandmother a non-sentimental appreciation for the "ugly bird," the raven, as it stays for the winter. And in the third narrative, entitled "Agatha Goes to School," Agatha saves the life of Catholic priest Father Fafard (perhaps, subversively, another "ugly thing" as shown in Krykorka's humorous illustration of the priest swirling in his billowing black cassock) who falls through thin ice while skating.

Million purports that the successful struggle for many Indigenous writers to "rearticulate the colonial residential school experience as *abuse* was not a move to articulate *victimology*" (73), drawing attention to the tendency of settler-cultures to reduce complex collective experiences down to one, overly simplified story. Kusugak describes his experience of being removed from his family to residential school in traumatic terms: "I was six years old," he says, "I was hauled away. To this very day, I have always wondered why I do not remember that first year of school...it's something that just seems to have been ripped from my memory" (Interview); and yet, his treatment of the experience in *Arctic Stories* can neither be reduced to a narrative of helplessness nor dismissed as a benign school story. In the afterword, Kusugak concedes that "there were some good things that happened; we got a good education," but he also speaks candidly about the Catholic Church and Canadian Government's role in the harassment and harm of children.

From out of the silence of experiences too traumatic to be remembered, Kusugak has woven a complex story for children that both affirms and reproduces his own history as *felt knowledge*—a personal and political reclamation of the past as a contemporary means for regeneration of self and community. Pain is taken into account, and so is the dynamic cultural and familial context of a life lived



before and beyond residential school, as shown in the first two stories that are set on the tundra. And while Kusugak does acknowledge that "there is a lot more that I could have said, but I didn't think it belonged in a children's book" (Interview), *Arctic Stories* vividly illuminates an alternative to dominant Canadian historical discourses, allowing for "present healing" to be grounded "in a past properly understood, *felt*, and moved beyond" (Million 73).

Keavy Martin, speaking about the importance of Inuit elders' testimonies, asserts that "the act of remembering and of telling stories about the past might itself be thought of as a deeply political act" (106). Michael Kusugak, born in 1948, might only now be considered an elder, but his picture books have always operated on a political level—interweaving memoir with fiction with traditional stories, affirming the cyclical relationality of the past with the present, and insisting that history be told through the personal and collective felt knowledges of those who were there.

The autobiographical nature of these texts affords Inuit and non-Inuit readers a powerful alternate history to Canada's dominant narratives, and the interfusional employment of the picture book modality creates both challenging and accessible

projects of cultural affirmation and resistance, respectfully implicating young readers as capable and necessary participants in the complex work of dismantling the Western ideology of an objective, historical "truth" in order to reveal the subjective truths of embodied knowledge and living memory. As such, just as Canadian Indigenous women writers "changed the actual conditions for *what* could be said" by insisting on the inclusion of lived experience in their adult and young adult narratives of the 1970s and 1980s (Million 54), Kusugak is actively changing the conditions for *how* things can be said—through the production of mixed-genre, intercultural picture books for children that draw on the principles of contemporary oral literacy.

While the experience of colonial impact on Indigenous lives is contingent and discursive across Canada (and, indeed, the world), Kusugak's picturebooks do accord the possibility that localized stories, "rich with emotional knowledges, of what pain and grief and hope meant or mean" (Million 54), can speak one to the other and allow for felt experience and affective testimony to be recognized as valid and vital forms of knowledge. In this, these picture books are actively engaged in the political work of decolonization, repeatedly challenging the dominant narratives of Canadian history and complicating the margins of storytelling; they are making space for remembering the violent legacy of European invasion on Indigenous lands, lives, and cultures as well as for recognizing the strength and adaptability of contemporary Indigenous peoples and their traditions. Through a treatment of feelings and experiences as important cultural knowledge, Kusugak's picture books provide a powerful means for disrupting and re-negotiating colonial systems of power; they do so within a framework of hope, healing, and renewal.

ka thleen ForreSter is a candidate in the Master of Arts in Children's Literature Program at the University of British Columbia. She is a recipient of the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship and is a past winner of the middle grade category of the Katherine Paterson Prize for Young Adult and Children's writing. Her thesis is a hybrid creative/critical inquiry into queer storytelling, memory and kinship.

judith Sal tman is Professor of children's literature and library services for children at the University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies. Her most recent book, *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Illustrated Books and Publishing* (co-authored with Gail Edwards) was the recipient of the International Research Society for Children's Literature book award. She is the recipient of the IBBY-Canada Claude Aubry Award for distinguished service within the field of children's literature.

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1 Singular of Inuit.

2 Wolf and DePasquale suggest that there are two reasons for this: 1) pressure on authors to produce positive images of Nativeness to counter the negative stereotypes, both historical and contemporary, that abound in popular culture, and 2) the assumptions about age appropriateness and children's innocence that frame children's picture book publishing (92).

3 Million argues that the experiential narratives of the 1970s and 1980s, written by Canadian First Nation women writers (the likes of Maria Campbell, Lee Maracle, and Ruby Slipperjack) were politically implemental in exploding the so-called "objective" colonial histories that held reign in Canada at the time.

4 This interview was initially undertaken as research for *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing*, co-authored by Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman. As only a small section of the interview was included in *Picturing Canada*, we chose to utilize it as a vital part of this paper.

5 For further discussion on Munsch and Kusugak's collaboration, see Edwards and Saltman, *Picturing Canada* 203.

6 What in Inuktitut would be called "unipkaaqtuaq" (Martin 42).

7 For a more detailed conversation on the mid-twentieth century trend of the "illustrated legend" in a Canadian context, see Wolf and DePasquale 89-90.

8 The strategic use of language and narrative to resist/interpolate dominant readings, and reinforce/embody cultural difference, is discussed in detail by Clare Bradford in *Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature.* In particular, see pages 52-58.

9 This was at a time when suicide amongst Inuit youth was on a steep incline and continued to rise. The suicide rate in Nunavut in 2003 was up to ten times as high as the rest of Canada (Kral 307).

10 Rhoda Karetak is thanked in the copyright page of *Northern Lights* for permitting her *amaut* (decorative parka) to be photographed.

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Set in the hustle and bustle of New York City's Manhattan, Bob Staake's *Bluebird* is a wordless narrative that brings together a shy young boy and a charismatic little bird in its exploration of both camaraderie and bereavement. After quietly observing the boy's rough day at school under the jeers of some schoolyard bullies, the bluebird takes it upon himself to swoop in and befriend him. Staake's effecti e use of multi-paneled spreads traces the nuances of the boy and the bluebird's blossoming relationship as they play a game of hide and seek, share a cookie, and sail a toy boat at the pond where the bluebird connects the boy to the other friendly children playing around them. The increasing darkness of Staake's grey, white, and blue palette brings with it a reappearance of the scowling bullies; and as the bluebird dives between the boy and the stick one of the bullies throws, the unexpected death of the bluebird is tackled head on by Staake through a small solid black panel followed by a zoomed in focus on the boy's emotional changes from shock to grief and, final y, acceptance. The bullies fearfully run away, but in their place the boy is greeted by a flo k of rainbow-coloured birds, which lift him and the bluebird high above the city skyline. Meant to be an open-ended conclusion to the book, the reader is encouraged to bring his or her own interpretation to the story – a powerfully visual and wordless way to escape didacticism and empower discussion about an intense subject matter.

Melissa Li Sheung Ying

Bluebird
Bob Staake
New York: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2013;
40 pp.
ISBN 9780375870378
(Picture Book; Ages 4+)

Articles

A Filipino Grandmother Grimm: Subversion of Foreign Fairy Tales through Indigenization and Cultural Appropriation in Mga Kuwento ni Lola Basyang (The Stories of Grandmother Basyang)

Rhoda Myra Garces-Bacsal, Ruanni Tupas and Jesus Federico Hernandez

Introduction: The Role of Magic and Fairy Stories in Children's Lives

Bettelheim wrote a treatise in 1975 on the uses of enchantment to stimulate a child's mind and facilitate personality development. According to him, the child is able to derive coherence from the turmoil of his or her inner feelings and understand abstract ethical concepts more viscerally through fairy tales. Apart from providing children an escape and a means through which they can find resource in their inner world, Jack Zipes suggested that fairy tales "play a crucial role in the socialization of children over much of the modern world" (110). Fairy tales are also said to function as a "safekeeper of desires" (Hohr 101), as they allow children to develop their social and emotional competence in the face of harsh reality.

More recent research studies point to fairy tales serving as a roadmap helping children find their "pathway to love, power and privilege, while at the same time pointing the way back to safety and serenity of their home" (Tsitsani, et al. 267). Anthony Zehetner emphasized the relevance of fairy tales to a modernized twenty-first-century society, even more so with the many social ills and rapid shifts in global realities that contemporary children need to navigate.

This kind of personal illumination and self-insight becomes more textured and complex when juxtaposed against a long and tumultuous history of colonialism, disempowerment, and the loss of one's voice in a developing country like the Philippines. Reclaiming this power and taking back one's voice through an indigenization of foreign fairy tales lie at the very core of the *Stories of Lola Basyang* (1925), through which seemingly-innocuous fantasies from the West are painstakingly removed from its context, reconfigured with locally subversive elements and dispositions, and indigenized to redefine Filipino identity. They serve as subtle means through which the so-called colonial subjects navigate the difficult and painful terrains of colonial life (generally referring to more than three centuries of continuities of

Spanish and American colonialism and, specifically, to American colonial rule in the first four decades of the twentieth century), where open resistance to foreign rule could pose real dangers to the lives of the subjugated. Thus, cultural strategies of appropriation serve as "weapons of the weak" (Scott), testifying to the dynamic identity work and formation among the colonized amidst structures of unfreedom.

Contextualizing Lola Basyang

Severino Reyes, a revolutionary playwright better known as the Father of Tagalog Plays, began publishing *Mga Kuwento ni Lola Basyang* in 1925 for the weekly magazine *Liwayway*. Initially intended as a filler for the magazine, *Lola Basyang* became so popular that it was turned into a regular weekly column—amassing a total of five hundred fairy tales written by Reyes' death in 1942 (Gutierrez).

Reyes was inspired by the image of a grandmother sitting in her rocking chair, her betel-nut box nearby, gathering together the children in the household after dinner and telling them tales of magic and enchantment. This became the indigenous storytelling template in which the *Lola Basyang* stories were framed (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Although fluent in Spanish, Reyes deliberately wrote the stories in Tagalog to reach a much wider Filipino audience. During the colonial and early postcolonial period (that is, after the Philippines 'gained' its political independence from the United States in the 1940s)—and even up to the present time—having access to beautifully-illustrated, gilt-edged, leather-bound fairy tale books from the West is indicative of a person's wealth and high standing in society. Reyes created a local portal to these foreign tales by transforming them, thereby owning them, and distributing them in a cheap, easily-accessible format as read through his weekly columns in a Filipino magazine. He imbued the foreign fairy tales with social tensions and realities from within a local context. He overtly inverted the balance of power by allowing the underdog to prevail, giving a voice to the silenced in most of his tales.

Our choice of *Lola Basyang* strategically positions our paper as a contemporary response to interlocking economic, cultural, and sociopolitical conditions and structures that continue to shape the production and consumption of children's stories in the Philippines. To paraphrase Filipino writer and critic Eugene Evasco, while the political economy and culture of reading connive to make reading in general an inaccessible cultural practice to most Filipinos, Filipino children's literature is a sophisticated art and business to those who patronize it. The quality of writing has improved dramatically, and even the number of children's books published has increased yearly, especially in recent years (Evasco 106-7). The challenge now is how to consolidate an aesthetics and a politics of Philippine children's literature, in light of the fact that this particular genre clearly has colonial and foreign imprints. Moreover, there is, admittedly, still always the danger of children's stories being deployed to perpetuate social inequalities and dominant harmful ideologies (Fernandez; Rogers and Christian). This paper helps to recover the stories of *Lola Basyang* from their colonial moorings and reframe them as subversive or decolonizing texts which, in turn, complicate the historical project of Filipino identity-making as seen through children's literature as an appropriating indigenous practice.

The original context of the *Lola Basyang* stories was, generally, the imperialist milieu of the first four decades of twentieth-century Philippines and, specifically, the contested colonial governance of the

United States. Both the general and specific contexts of imperialist rule need to be emphasized here because, while indeed this was the time of the American colonization of the Philippines, in essence, the country was merely experiencing a continuation of foreign imperialist rule that stretched back more than three centuries. Before the United States violently flexed its muscles upon the Philippine archipelago through the much-forgotten Philippine-American War of 1989-1902, the Philippines was governed by Spain for 333 years. In the last years of the nineteenth century, Filipinos were winning the war against Spain and, in 1898, declared their independence from Spanish rule. However, through what has been known as the Treaty of Paris of 1898, and mainly because it did not want to surrender to its erstwhile colonial subjects, Spain ceded the country to the Americans for the amount of $20,000,000 on December 10, 1898 (Pomeroy). Thus, the much-fought independence movement suffered a major blow when the United States, by sheer economic and military might, "took over" the Philippines from Spain (Tupas).

The point here is that, while there would certainly be radical differences between the colonial structures of governance of Spain and the United States, nevertheless, the cultural dominance of Spanish rule was very much embedded in Filipino life at the time of American rule. American-Filipino elite collaboration and rule was such that those who immediately changed allegiance from Spain to the United States were actually the Spanish-speaking Filipino elite who needed to protect their political and economic positions which they enjoyed during the time of Spanish colonization. Severino Reyes himself was fluent in Spanish, thus his use of Tagalog in the *Lola Basyang* stories was not only a way to penetrate the sensibilities of the Filipino masses but also could be interpreted as a resistance to the languages of imperialism (Spanish and English). Thus, culturally, this would explain why the Lola Basyang stories would feature clearly Spanish influences, for example, clothing representing imperialist rule. In other words, the subtle anti-imperialist tropes of *Lola Basyang* stories did not have a clearly American or Spanish face; they could be viewed generally as voices against foreign domination.

Method of Analysis

The tales by Severino Reyes were written for a wider audience, including adults. The *Lola Basyang* stories were then aired on the radio in the 1950s, appeared in comic book form, were transformed into a play, and served as basis for television dramas and for film—even before the term "transmedia" was coined (Rodrigues and Bidarra). Gilda Cordero-Fernando rewrote twelve of the stories for children for the first time in 1997 (see Reyes) and published them in a thick 246-paged tome. The most recent retelling of *Lola Basyang* for children was written by Christine S. Bellen, published from 2004 to 2011. Bellen's stories were selected for examination here because each story was published individually in a thirty-two-page storybook that is sold for 82 PHP each (around 1.50 USD)—rendering the books more accessible to the larger public and, thus, presumably wider in their reach.

Katrina Gutierrez's examination of Bellen's *Lola Basyang* retelling explored the dialectic between the global and the local culture in picture books and how a glocal identity is formed in the Filipino child through the stories. Our paper departs from this kind of reading by grounding our analysis with an indigenization approach to *Lola Basyang,* our point being that the retelling continues to navigate the country's unending quest for decolonizing national identity formation, subverted many times throughout the country's struggle for independence, both from colonial and neocolonial influences. Moreover, while Gutierrez only highlighted four stories in her analysis, this paper attempts to do a grounded analysis of the predominant themes in the narratives across all the twenty books that Bellen published from 2004 to 2011 (see Appendix A for the complete list of stories). The first five stories published in 2004 are all written in Tagalog with a one-paged English translation found at the end of the book. The subsequent fifteen stories are bilingual.

We analyzed the twenty stories individually in relation to their characters and setting, predominant themes, illustrations/art, and the main conflicts noted in the tales. An iterative analysis was done as we moved back and forth across each of the tales with new emerging themes noted and observed in subsequent stories until a point of saturation was reached whereby no new themes are noted (Creswell). For the purposes of this paper, only emergent themes

that are relevant to decolonization and indigenization are included. These themes are (1) didacticism, subversion, and the politics of fairy tales; (2) greed and disfigurement; and lastly, (3) cultural appropriation and indigenization of Western fairy tales.

Didacticism, Subversion, and the Politics of Fairy Tales

– Gather round me now and be quiet, for my story is about to begin ...

In the foreword written by the publishers of Cordero-Fernando's 1970s retelling of Lola Basyang, it was noted how Reyes would always incorporate lessons in his stories: "Reyes always used to say that all stories must teach readers a lesson—otherwise the writer had no business writing at all!" (13). While the moralistic and didactic tone in children's literature has been decried as infantilizing and old-fashioned, librarians and children's literature experts acknowledge that there are stories that can be both subversive and moralistic at the same time—such as the German story *Struwwelpeter* and Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith's *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (Bird, Danielson, & Sieruta). In the first place, we also take Raylene Ramsay's contention that "all art has often unstated didactic purposes" (43). Moralism or didacticism is a political act and typically responds to a whole gamut of issues and experiences saturating a particular social milieu, and it is therefore not intrinsically undesirable; in other words, it can also become a decolonizing act if it is "political and disruptive, challenging worldviews and systems of power" (Ramsay 43). In some cases, didacticism is an imperative "in order to be heard or seen" (44).

The *Lola Basyang* stories are rich with this fusion of subversion and didacticism with morals that are discernible and often articulated in the narratives. However, the lessons serve more as voices of empowerment and a redefinition of one's often-unfair realities, providing the oppressed with tools (albeit mostly magical and make-believe) to improve their life circumstances. Through magical intervention, the protagonists obtain some form of social justice from greedy villains who are usually in positions of power and authority.

Most of the stories we examined follow the trope of an impoverished character that shows compassion to one who is even more unfortunate than he or she is, thereby gaining magical means to solve problems

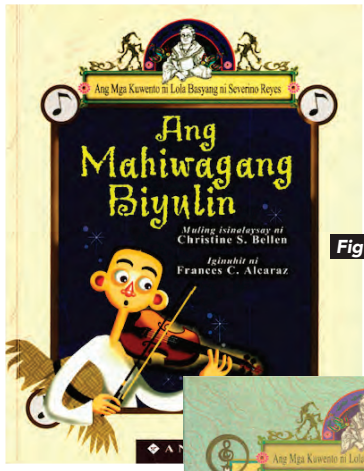

Figure 2

Figure 3

or carry out a quest. An example of this can be seen in *Ang Mahiwagang Biyulin* (The Enchanted Violin) (see Figure 2), where Rodrigo, the downtrodden protagonist, gives his last piece of bread to an old beggar who, in turn, gives him an enchanted violin that becomes the key for him to reclaim what is rightfully his from his master Ahab, a rich and greedy businessman who had refused to give Rodrigo his two years' worth of salary.

The same story thread is evident in *Ang Plautin ni Periking* (Periking's Flute) (see Figure 3), which incidentally was the very first story published by Severino Reyes in *Liwayway Magazine.* This is the story of three orphaned brothers, Berto, Tolo, and Periking. The youngest brother, Periking, has a wooden toy boat that gets stuck in the mouth of an enchanted fish. When the two older brothers assist him in freeing the fish, the latter gives the two older brothers magical objects that afford them special powers. As Periking is left alone while his two older brothers go to find their fortune, an old bearded man appears to Periking warning him that his brothers are in danger

and gives him a white blanket that will grant him whatever his heart desires, a magic hat that strikes lightning if he says the Lord's name in vain (this is in reference to the Roman Catholic's Ten Commandments), and a flute that could make anyone dance. He uses the said magical objects to free a group of young men, including his brothers, from a *Gobernador* who had imprisoned them to take away their magical powers.

In *Periking's Flute* (see Fig. 4) and *The Enchanted Violin* (see Fig. 5), there is an obvious mockery of the superior social status of the Gobernador and Ahab the businessman as their dignity is undermined by their uncontrollable dancing brought about, respectively, by the enchanted flute and violin. The illustrations also depict Ahab and the Gobernador like Spanish *conquistadores* (conquerors) in the late 1800s with all their fineries and accouterments signifying power, taking advantage of the weak and powerless *Indios* (natives) who are outfitted in simple ragged clothing. Yet, their authority is supplanted and mocked through their uncontrollable dancing, consolidating the work of mockery and subversion as inextricable literary strategies (Torlone 78-107).

Very much a characterization of imperialist behavior (Foster and McChesney) which served as the sociopolitical canvas against which the stories were written, both villains are portrayed as preying on the weak, taking advantage of the protagonists' lowly status and inability to defend themselves (as is the case of Rodrigo in *The Enchanted Violin)*, or attempting to steal their magical powers (as is the case in *Periking's Flute*, where the Gobernador locked up all the young men with special powers in a tower). These two stories can clearly be regarded as allegorical tales of the *Indio* or "native" Filipino reclaiming his or her power from the greedy colonizers or Western hegemony as a whole.

Of Greed and Disfigurement

Other examples of moral lessons that are discernible in the stories but still may be viewed as allegories of the rapacity of colonialism and the capitalist ideologies that accompanied it (Bradford; Nodelman) include *Ang Parusa ng Duwende* (The Dwarf's Punishment) (see Figure 6), where the greedy and duplicitous master of a poor young boy is punished by a dwarf and driven into madness; *Alamat ng Lamok* (The Legend of the Mosquito) (see Figure 7), where an entire town is punished by a giant with the birth of blood-sucking insects that thrive on filth and disarray because of the people's inability to take care of their environment; and *Ang Kapatid ng Tatlong Marya* (The Brother of the Three Marias) (see Figure 8),

Figure 5

Figure 4

in which a woodcutter/folk healer is punished with the loss of his three daughters for his greed when he cuts down the *kolesmeloko* tree that gave him sustenance and life. In *Ang Palasyo ng mga Duwende* (see Figure 9), the stepmother and stepsister's envy and greed prove to be their undoing—an indigenous twist to both "Cinderella" and "Little Snow-White," which will be discussed below.

Figure 6

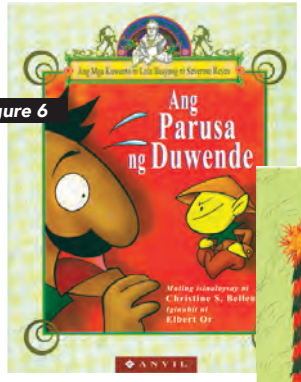

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Another life lesson imparted to the reader is not to judge people by their appearances, with a not-so-subtle call for greater kindness and compassion. Five out of the twenty stories present disfigured heroes who are either born with their deformity (*Si Pandakotyong* [Pandakotyong]) (see Figure 10), have been cursed by witches and wizards (*Ang Prinsipeng Mahaba ang Ilong* [The Prince with the Long Nose]) (see Figure 11), or are shapeshifters (*Ang Prinsipe ng mga Ibon* [The Prince of the Birds]) (see Figure 12). These heroes can either transform into a man or an enchanted creature as seen in *The Prince of the Birds*, or they may be redeemed through extraordinary heroic deeds (as seen in the case of the tiny *Pandakotyong)*, bathing in the Jordan river (Ang Prinsipeng Unggoy [*The Monkey Prince*]) (see Figure 13), or love's true kiss (Ang Mahiwagang Kuba — *The Enchanted Hunchback)* (see fig. 14). The skills and strengths of the protagonists in these five stories are undermined by virtue of their deformity.

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

In *Ang Prinsipeng Unggoy* (The Monkey Prince), the protagonist in the story is born with a monkey-like appearance after his parents, in desperation, prayed for a child even if he turned out as ugly as a monkey. Ridiculed because of his appearance, the Monkey Prince travels aboard a ship to Greece where he learns about a Princess who was imprisoned in the middle of the sea by her Father. It was foretold that the Princess would bring shame and bad luck to the Kingdom, hence her banishment. Armed with heroism, good faith, and blind love, the Monkey Prince takes it upon himself to rescue the Princess only to be disparaged by the King of Greece, who regards him as a disgrace and an embarrassment, unfit for his daughter (see Fig. 15).

Figure 15

This character's trajectory could once again be perceived as an allegorical representation of the *Indio* not knowing his place in the world, trying to rise above his stature. Filipinos have been described as little brown monkeys by Western colonizers (Slotkin) or, more broadly, as *savages* especially in order to "justify seizure of the islands and repression of the indigenous independence movement in the Philippines" (845). Advised by his dead mother in a dream, the Monkey Prince is eventually transformed into a handsome figure by bathing in the River Jordan. He marries and takes the Greek Princess back to his Philippine hometown, further suggesting that he was never really accepted by his wife's (racist) family despite his changed appearance.

Cultural Appropriation and Indigenization of Western Fairy Tales

There is a polyphony of influences from the Spaniards, Japanese, Americans, Chinese, Malays, and Indians intermeshed with indigenous and animistic roots woven into the multivocality of stories in a colonized country like the Philippines. This is what Reyes attempts to capture through *Lola Basyang* and his fearless appropriation of fairy tales that will establish resonances with the common folk's sensibility.

Ang Palasyo ng mga Duwende (The Palace of the Dwarves) is one example of such an amalgamation of fairy tales—with traces of "Little Snow-White" and "Cinderella" from *The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham and published in 1901, thrown into an ethnic mix. In this story, one identifies parallels to "Cinderella" with the wealthy widowed father who remarries a woman who also has a daughter of her own. The illustrations used in Bellen's 2007 adaptation of *Lola Basyang,* however, deviate from the traditional Eurocentric garb with the characters outfitted in precolonial attire and the women's near-naked bodies covered in tattoos (see Fig. 16).

Figure 16

While the girls are described as having grown up in peaceful coexistence during the first few years, the stepmother and stepsister are overtaken with jealousy when they observe how Yani is growing more beautiful each day. The stepmother gets rid of Yani's father and claims that he simply disappeared while they were taking a stroll outside the town. Following the father's disappearance, Yani is treated like a servant. Not too long thereafter, Yani's stepsister Lotta, also invites her to take a stroll outside of town, asks her to play tag, then pushes Yani off the cliff with every intention of killing her. Unlike its European counterparts, in this tale one could discern how active a role both stepmother and stepsister play in ensuring the demise of the main characters. Of course, Yani does not die as she is rescued by dwarves. Once in the Palace of the Dwarves, Yani sees that her father is in a glass casket, under the spell of the Queen of the Fairies and trapped in an enchanted sleep (see Fig. 15).

Figure 17

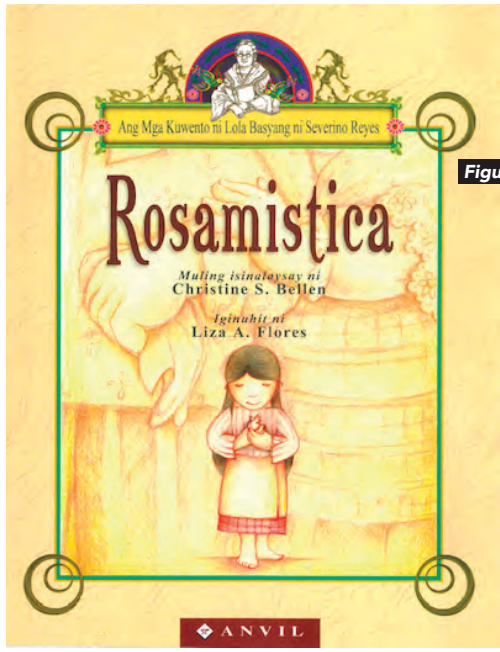

Figure 18

Elements of "Little Snow-White" could now be seen despite the absence of a magic vanity mirror and a powerful witch stepmother. The dwarf then advises Yani, "Yani, that bird flew in to bathe in the Stream of Life. When it returns you must wipe the water dripping from its body with a handkerchief. Dab the wet handkerchief on your father to remove the Queen's spell".

In this story, the reader sees a female protagonist who is clearly the heroine of the story as she strives to save her father's life. It turns out that the beautiful bird is an enchanted prince also cursed by the Queen of Fairies. When Yani plucks a long feather from his tail, he becomes Prince Beni-Hamad and is subsequently brought to the Prince's Kingdom with her father, and they all lived happily ever after. More than a role-reversal and a fusion of popular fairy tales, the story introduces new elements while removing others. Yani, the female, near-naked hero, who is pure in her intentions, takes charge of her situation and changes the course of her life by having a strong sense of self-agency. Lack of space prevents us from delving deep into the political and ideological lineage of Yani as a decolonizing character, but it is worth noting here that throughout the country's struggle for independence, the image and ideology of *Inang Bayan* (literally, "Mother Country") would figure prominently as a rallying trope for the Filipinos' earnest desire for self-determination (Roces).

Other *Lola Basyang* stories show resonances of influence from other well known or recognizable fairy tales, such as *Ang Prinsipeng Mahaba ang Ilong* (The Princess Who Has a Long Nose reminiscent of "Pinocchio,") see Figure 11) and the Cinderella-esque *Rosamistica* (see Figure 18), but similarly, they are re-presented not simply through a bricolage of cultural and literary influences but, more cuttingly and crucially perhaps, through a reclaiming of silenced voices and agency.

Conclusion

The intricate relationship between colonialism and children's stories has been well-documented, with many scholars arguing that children's stories emerging out of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries betray "a pattern of imperial culture" (Bradford 196; also McGillis). Pushing this line of thinking to one particular conclusion, other scholars do indeed operate "from the premise that children's literature is a form of colonialism" (Nodelman 29), constitutive of "imperialist activities" (33).

Decolonizing texts, however, such as the whole set of *Lola Basyang* stories, are "marked by a more complex and contradictory set of discursive practices" (Bradford 197). Space constraints prevent us from exploring more deeply specific issues and strategies deployed by the stories to deliver subtle messages of resistance amidst the reality of cooption and hegemonic rule. However, in broad strokes, we hope to have highlighted several emergent themes and strategies in the stories—strategies that highlight *Lola Basyang*'s participation in a Filipino project of decolonization and cultural appropriation. We see in these tales the punishment of greed with capitalistic un-

dertones, the mockery of the ruling political class's excesses of authority, the ascribing of agency and self-determination to society's weak and marginalized, and the denunciation of racism in intercultural contact. The Philippines' quest for self-determination has been described by some scholars as an unfinishable revolution (Hau), implying that the decolonizing project that has galvanized the nation through the many decades after political independence from the United States in 1945 continues to be a work-in-progress. Yet it is indeed in the unfinishability of the revolution for self-determination that we always find hope in the struggle and its success. *Lola Basyang* and her stories—retold many times amidst the onslaught of profit-driven writing and the business of writing for consumers of Disneyfied versions of folktales and in a global culture that devalues reading in general—remind us that Filipino identity is constantly being remade and we actually have an active role in shaping it and claiming ownership over it.

rhoda myra gar CeS-Ba CSal is an Assistant Professor at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. She is the Programme Leader of the Masters Program in High Ability Studies and Gifted Education. She serves as the Chairperson of the Programme Committee for the Asian Children's Writers and Illustrators Conference for the Asian Festival of Children's Content in Singapore.

ruanni tupaS is an Assistant Professor of Sociolinguistics at the English Language and Literature Academic Group of National Institute of Education and teaches, among a few others, Literature and Language Education in the MA level; and Language, Culture and Globalization in the PGDELT level. His expertise is multilingualism and education.

jeSuS Federi Co hernandez, Associate Professor, is a linguist who has likewise published internationally in connection to narrative themes found in award-winning children's stories from the Philippines, has co-edited *Beyond Folktales, Legends and Myths: A Rediscovery of Children's Literature in Asia,* and has done several international conference presentations on linguistics and children's texts.

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aC kno Wledgment S:

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a ppendix a : 20 r etold Stories of l ola Basyang written by Christine S. Bellen.

	Title	Illustrator	Year of Publication
	Filipino (with translation on last page)		
01	Ang Mahiwagang Biyulin	Frances Alcaraz	2004
02	Rosamistica	Liza Flores	2004
03	Ang Alamat ng Lamok	Ruben De Jesus	2004
04	Ang Plautin ni Periking	Albert Gamos	2004
05	Ang Parusa ng Duwende	Elbert Or	2004
	Bilingual (in text)		
06	Ang Binibining Tumalo sa Mahal na Hari	Elbert Or	2005
07	Ang Prinsipeng Mahaba ang Ilong	Liza A. Flores	2005
08	Ang Prinisipe ng mga Ibon	Frances Alcaraz	2005
09	Si Pandakotyong	Albert Gamos	2005
10	Ang Prinsipeng Duwag	Ruben de Jesus	2005
11	Ang Kapatid ng Tatlong Marya	Frances Alcaraz	2007
12	Ang Palasyo ng mga Duwende	Albert Gamos	2007
13	Angting-anting	Hubert Fucio	2007
14	Ang Pitong Tanga	Ruben de Jesus	2007
15	Ang Sultan Saif	Liza Flores	2007
16	Ang Pag-ibig ni Maryang Sinukuan	Blooey Singson	2011
17	Labindalawang Masasayang Prinsesa	Abi Goy	2011
18	Ang Mahiwagang Kuba	Sergio Bumatay	2011
19	Pedrong Walang Takot	Martin Malabanan	2011
20	Ang Prinsipeng Unggoy	Herbert Fucio	2011

Articles

Suicide Prevention in Nêhiyawi (Cree) Comic Books

Judith Leggatt

One of the many negative effects of colonization in North America is the epidemic of suicide infecting Indigenous youth, who see no place for themselves in the world and choose death since they see no hope for themselves or their people. In 2001, in response to the suicide crisis, the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Minister of Health commissioned "a panel of eight Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers and health practitioners to make recommendations regarding the prevention of suicide among First Nations youth." The result was a report put out by Health Canada and titled "Acting on What We Know: Preventing Youth Suicide in First Nations." In their survey of key suicide data, the commission notes that, in Canada, First Nations youth living on reserve are five to six times more likely to commit suicide than is average for the general population, and in some communities, that statistic jumps to over thirty times (Health Canada). A key factor behind this statistic is a lack of individual and communal agency. The reports' statistics also show that those communities that have higher degrees of cultural continuity and of autonomy over societal structures also have lower suicide rates, with self-government being the most beneficial factor (Health Canada). Similarly, communities that have maintained cultural traditions tend to have lower suicide rates (Health Canada). In the summer of 2015, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada presented its findings and recommendations, which included an acknowledgement that one of the legacies of residential schools is this increase in suicide among Indigenous Youth. The commission calls "upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to publish annual progress reports and assess long-term trends," with suicide rates included in the list of key indicators (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 329). Indigenous communities have been addressing high suicide rates through social programs, intervention and education, often overtly, but also through creative, culturally appropriate means.

This paper will examine the depiction of suicide in two Nêhiyawi (Cree)[11] comic books: *Darkness Calls* by Steven Keewatin Sanderson (2006) and *7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga* by David Alexander Robertson and Scott B. Henderson (2012). Both texts are written for Indigenous youth, and both have the didactic aim of preventing suicide. I will demonstrate not only how the formal conjunction of oral storytelling and graphic novel in these two works emphasizes the necessity of bringing Nêhiyawi history and tradition into the contemporary world but also how the interrelation of the two genres parallels the relationships between community and individual that are inherent to health. Both texts reconcile apparent dichotomies in genre, and in understandings of individual and community identity, in order to create healthy alternatives for Indigenous youth.

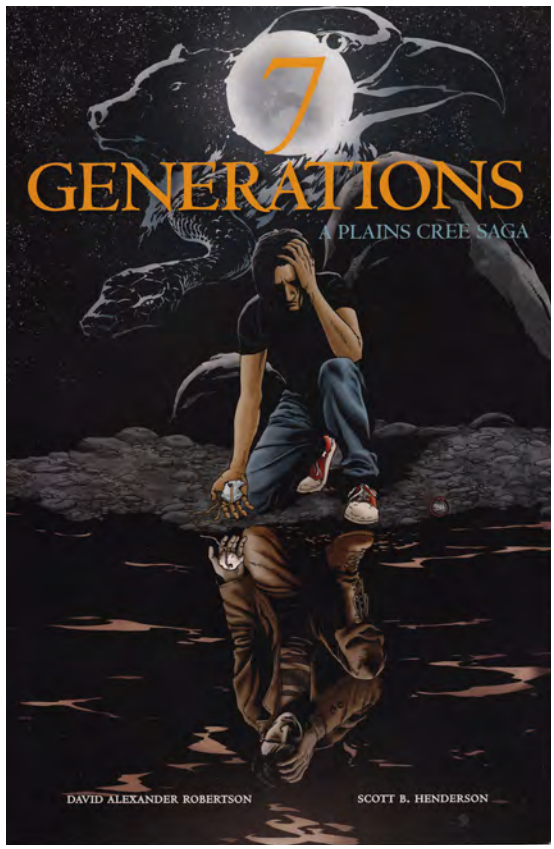
The "Acting on What We Know" report iden-

tifies three interconnected components in suicide prevention. The first is "Primary prevention," which "aims to reduce suicide risk by improving the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health or well-being of a population" (Health Canada). This is the primary goal of both comics: to reduce the risk of suicide in their readers by giving them the cultural and historical tools and knowledges to find a place for themselves within their society and to live healthy individual and collective lives. These two texts are part of a larger growth in Indigenous comics, which is helping to refute the misrepresentation and stereotyping of Indigenous people that is typical within the mainstream of the genre. Recent collections such as *Trickster: Native American Tales: A Graphic Collection* (2010) edited by Matt Dembicki, *Native American Classics* (2013) edited by Tom Pomplun, John E. Smelcer and Joseph Bruchac, and *Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection* (2015) edited by Hope Nicholson all combine Indigenous and non-Indigenous creators working together to recast Indigenous stories and storytelling traditions in a new genre. These collections draw attention to many individual Indigenous graphic texts and their creators, including—in addition to Sanderson and Robertson—Joseph Bruchac, David Cutler, Stephen Gladue, Jay Odjick, Elizabeth LaPensée, Fred Pashe, Michael Sheyahshe, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, Arigon Starr, Richard Van Camp, Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, and many others.[2] Just as many volumes in the *Graphic Classics* series encourage young readers to explore classic literature from the Western tradition, so the explosion of Indigenous comics over the past decade provides one avenue into traditional storytelling for the next generation. Seeing their people and traditions positively represented in a popular genre strengthens young Indigenous peoples' ties to their culture and heritage, giving them a foundation on which to stand.

Both *Darkness Calls* and *7 Generations* deal directly with building community health for the purpose of reducing suicide risk, and they achieve these ends by dramatizing instances of more direct suicide intervention. *Darkness Calls* is the first of many comics published by The Healthy Aboriginal Network, which promotes "health, literacy and wellness through the production of" comic books and "other visual resources for youth" (Healthy Aboriginal Network) and deals with issues ranging from physical fitness and diet, to education, to participation in gangs. *Darkness Calls* is written to create community conversation and to be a temporary stand in for youth who find themselves contemplating suicide and who do not have a superhero, or a mysterious Elder, to intervene. The comic thus depicts and enacts "Secondary prevention" or "early intervention" which "aims to help with potentially suicidal individuals either before they injure themselves or during a suicidal crisis" (Health Canada). In Sanderson's story, an elder steers Kyle, the young Nêhiyawi protagonist, away from thoughts of suicide by telling him a mythological story about Wesakecak, the Nêhiyawi trickster hero, and Wihtiko, a cannibal spirit who feeds on lost souls. The cover art shows these two mythological figures looming over Kyle, who looks small and defeated between them. Wihtiko's hand, made huge by perspective, is reaching out to capture him (Figure 1). While the connection between Wihtiko and suicide is not explicit in this introductory image, the danger to Kyle is clear. At risk youth who share Kyle's feel-

ings of helplessness might identify with this image and be encouraged to pick up the comic where they would not pick up a more overtly didactic pamphlet.

Where *Darkness Calls* is written specifically to address the suicide epidemic in Indigenous youth, *7 Generations* does not have such an overtly didactic purpose. Like many graphic novels, it was released in parts, with the separate issues—*Stones*, *Scars*, *Ends/Begins*, and *The Pact*—being released from 2010 to 2012. Although suicide is the impetus for the narrative, which begins with the words of Edwin's suicide note over images of his mother finding him comatose, Robertson and Henderson also explore many interrelated issues of community health affecting the First Nations—thereby putting his suicide attempt into a larger historical, cultural, and family context. Their text depicts an example of "Tertiary prevention" (or postvention), which "focuses on people who have been affected by suicidal behaviour: suicide attempters, who are at high risk for a recurrence, and bereaved friends and family members, who are also at risk for increased distress, psychiatric morbidity and the development of suicidal thoughts and behaviours" (Health Canada). In *7 Generations*, Edwin's parents help him to heal by recounting his family history, and the negative health effects of colonization, from the early nineteenth century to the present. Again, the cover shows a defeated looking protagonist, and this time illustrates how the stories of the past affect the family's current situation, with James's reflection in the water showing not him, but his father Edwin looking equally defeated (Figure 2). The stone pendant they both hold represents the connections between the experiences of generations of the family and their interdependence. Not only does the past affect the present, but Edwin's individual recovery needs to be situated within a plural and communal return to health. Both father and son need to heal and to mend their relationship in order for either of them to recover. The story acknowledges the wider community in need of tertiary prevention. By depicting the healing journeys of two Nehiyawak, one considering suicide and the other recovering from an attempt, the storytellers in *Darkness Calls* and *7 Generations* provide paths for their readers to follow to lead them out of danger. More importantly, the stories present images of, and possibilities for, communal health—showing the interconnections between primary, secondary, and tertiary preventions.



Both texts use the formal conventions of the graphic novel to emphasize the personal power and healing gained by the protagonists through listening to the historical and mythological stories. In *Darkness Calls*, the Elder tells the story of Wihtiko and Wesakecak, but the reader sees the story mainly through Kyle's imagining of it. The story itself is a traditional one, told by the elder using words that could still fit with the traditional setting. He describes Wihtiko as "a demon spirit who live in the woods. If you go into his woods he'll draw you in. He'll use your confusion. He'll use your sadness, and he'll use your fears against you, and he'll eat your spirit. Right now . . . oohh, he's eating a lot of spirits, especially among them teenagers" (23); the cannibal spirit here is an obvious metaphor for suicide. Sanderson links this suicide to a loss of culture, explaining that Wesakecak is "sad 'cause nobody hears his stories anymore. Nobody believes in his medicine. He's lost his power" (23-24). In the first two pages of the Elder's story, Sanderson uses a variety of transition types to connect the storytelling situa-

tion, the story as told by the Elder, and the story as imagined by Kyle.[3] The story begins with visuals of a traditional setting, apparently as imagined by the Elder, with Wihtiko skulking in a dark forest, and what Scott McCloud calls "moment to moment transition" as the image zooms in on the face of Wihtiko (23, panels 1-2). There is then a "scene to scene" transition, which usually asks the reader to make connections "across significant distances of time and space" (McCloud 71), but here makes those connections between Kyle's physical world and the world of the story being told. At this point, the pictorial narrative shifts to focus on the interaction between storyteller and audience, which is created by "subject to subject" transitions that shift the reader's gaze back and forth between the face of the Elder and the reactions of Kyle's eyes as he listens to the story (23, panels 3-6). Scene to scene transitions move the narrative to Wesajecak in a forest by a campfire, with a wigwam and a teepee in the background (24, panel 1), and then back to the storytelling situation

(24, panels 2-5). The focus on the storyteller's hands (24, panel 4), in particular, points to the potential for comics to recreate oral traditions more effectively than does traditional written literature, in which, as Thomas King points out, we lose not only the voice of the storyteller but also "the gestures" and "the interaction between storyteller and audience" (186). Sanderson's art puts the latter two back into the narrative. By emphasizing the frame narrative, he reminds the reader that this comic book superhero story is part of an ongoing oral tradition that relies on visual cues, albeit different ones than comics.

In the final scene-to-scene transition of the two pages, we move from a close up on Kyle's excited eyes (24, panel 5) to how he sees the story, which recasts it into a contemporary urban setting and a battle between superhero and supervillian, familiar to a contemporary youth audience through the Marvel and DC universes. The combination of the words of the Elder's oral story and the superhero illustrations form what McCloud calls an interdependent combination, "where word and pictures go hand in hand to convey an idea that neither could convey alone" (155), in this case that the Elder's story transforms as it its translated in Kyle's imagination. The words still fit with tradition, but Kyle pictures Wesakecak putting "on the clothes that he thinks would impress the demon, Wihtiko" as the figure donning a superhero costume, in red white and blue, emphasizing impressive muscles and six-pack abs (24, panels 6-8). Similarly, Kyle imagines the Elder's words "Wesakecak leaves his lodge" as Wesakecak bursting through a plate glass window at the top of a massive skyscraper (25, panel 4). We see Wesekecak using his shapeshifting power to turn into a raven as followed by a transformation back into superhero form, now atop a motorcycle (26-27), and Wihtoko's realm, which the Elder describes as "the darkest places, where all that evil . . . where all that power of his is manifested" is an industrial wasteland with an empty warehouse at its center (27-29).

The dual narrative achieved by the words of the Elder, which represent the oral tradition, and the comic book illustrations, which represent Kyle's understanding, not only demonstrates the ways in which all stories change in the move from storyteller to audience but also the transitions that happen in stories as they move from one generation to the next. Most of the battle between Wesekecak and Wihtiko

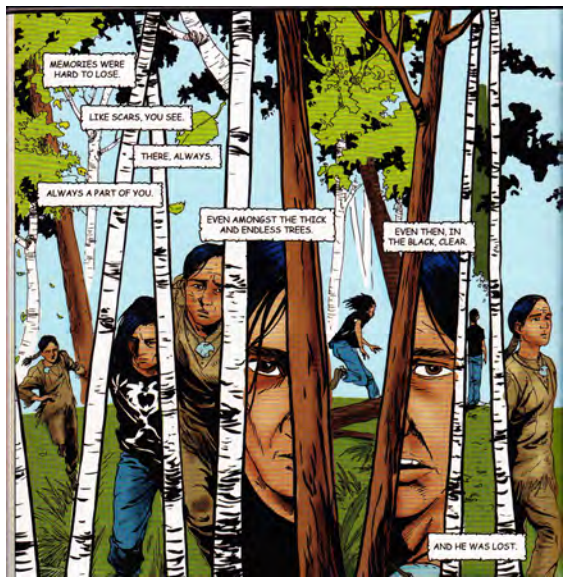
is presented in images only (29-39), suggesting that the story told by the Elder has taken on a new life in Kyle's imagination. At the same time, the Elder's vision and Kyle's are depicted in a similar color palate, using a style that, as Cree-Metis critic Deanna Reder notes in "Sacred Stories in Comic Book Form: A Cree Reading of *Darkness Calls*," is more cartoon and less realist than the style of drawing in the frame story, though both are cartoons (Reder 186). These similarities emphasize that the differences are superficial and that both the oral story that the Elder tells and the comic vision that Kyle experiences while listening are the same story. In addition, the use of the comics medium to tell both the realist story of Kyle struggling with his self-worth and the story the Elder tells also explicitly links the comic genre with the process of oral storytelling.

There is a danger in reading the transformation of the story as an indication of assimilation. Wesakecak is transformed by Kyle's imagination into a masked hero, sporting the red, white, and blue of Spiderman and Captain America and a feather that links him to Marvel's Proudstar brothers, John (aka Thunderbird of X-Men) and James (aka Warpath of X-Force), two of the few Indigenous superheroes.[4] Likewise, the visual depiction of Wihtiko owes as much to Marvel's appropriation of the figure as Wendi-go as it does to descriptions of the figure in traditional stories. Sanderson's use of what can be stereotypical material at first appears troubling. Michael A. Sheyahshe, in *Native Americans in Comic Books*, argues that the Proudstar brothers reinforce stereotypes of Indigenous people and that James conveys "little insight into Apache culture" (89). He pays particular attention to John's feather: "While there are some tribes that use feather adornments in this way, this choice aligns the character with an iconic stereotype of all Indians dressing similarly. Besides, Apache people do not wear feathers in this manner" (106). It would be simple, but incorrect, to read these echoes as signs that Kyle has been assimilated into mainstream mass culture and that his reading of traditional stories through the lens of a genre that tends to replicate stereotypes and generalize Indigenous people (Sheahshe 10) inscribes those stereotypes and generalizations onto the Indigenous source material. Sanderson acknowledges and dismisses this possible interpretation by associating it with Kyle's math teacher, a personification of all that is wrong with western educational authority. The teacher punishes Kyle for drawing the Cree trickster as a comic book superhero. He does not recognize that Kyle is engaging with the material but berates him, saying, "You obviously don't respect him or your own culture enough to be here" and sends him to the office (10). In the process, however, he interrupts the Elder's attempt to tell his story to a school full of Indigenous youth in a community that has faced recent suicides and needs to hear the story. The teacher is obviously the one who is showing a lack of respect and cutting off the storytelling tradition. Western educational practices stereotypically suggest that comic books are a frivolous waste of time; likewise, western anthropological and ethnographic discourse can read the casting of a traditional story in any guise other than the romanticized past as a denigration of culture. Both are misreadings.

That the comic book depictions of Wihtiko and Wesakecak differ from traditional Nêhiyawi understandings of the figures is presented by Sanderson and the Elder not as an assimilation of traditional story into the Western narrative genre of the comic book but rather as an incorporation of the comic book into the story structures of Nêhiyawi mythology, privileging the Indigenous content over the Western form. Deanna Reder argues convincingly that "*Darkness Calls* is no mere comic, but rather a sacred story about Wesakecak," and shows how the story not only depicts Cree mythological figures but also addresses Kyle's problems by appealing to four basic Cree values (180, 181). The Elder explicitly refutes the teacher's reading, reminding the reader that this authoritarian figure cannot be trusted. He saves Kyle's sketch and tells him "It's a really good idea—using your art as a way to keep the stories alive," which in turn validates Sanderson's own updating of Wesakecak (22). As well, the explanation for the somewhat stereotypical vision of the figure in the story lies in an understanding that Wesakechak is traditionally a shapeshifter. The Elder tells the school assembly that "The way he looks is really up to the imagination of the storyteller. Sometimes he's an old man, Sometimes, he's young. He can be a Raven or a Coyote. Anything he needs to tell us his story" (9). It seems reasonable that, even though he is not traditionally a fighter, Wesakecak could take on superhero form to connect with Kyle, who is obviously a fan of that genre. Wesakecak as superhero wears a

mask and subverts the imagery that goes with that mask, reminding us that all superhero costumes are disguises. The muscles and feathers, which could tie into what Sam McKegney calls "hypermasculine stereotypes of the noble savage and the bloodthirsty warrior" (1), are undercut by the other form Wesakecak takes in the comic book, his superhero "secret identity": the pictures on the final page tell us that the Elder is actually Wesakecak in one of his many guises. As the Elder drives away in his pickup truck, the sound changes to that of Wesakecak's motorcycle, and the final panel shows him flying away in the form of Raven (48, panels 4-6). Wesakecak saves Kyle, not through a comic book standoff, but by telling stories over tea in the kitchen. The identification between storyteller and subject, made clear through the graphic medium, further ties the graphic novel to the oral tradition and emphasizes the role of Sanderson as a storyteller who occupies a space similar to both Kyle, the budding cartoonist, and the Elder/Wesakecak, who passes on cultural knowledge to the next generation.

As in *Darkness Calls*, oral and graphic storytelling intertwine in *7 Generations*. Robertson and Henderson link Edwin's story explicitly to his parents' oral histories that they tell him as he comes to terms with life after his suicide attempt: his ancestor Stone's traditional life on the prairie and loss of a brother in a raid; the coming of smallpox and subsequent change of life in the next generation; his father James's experiences in residential school, including the abuse and death of James's younger brother Thomas; and James's struggle to come to terms with that legacy, which leads to alcoholism and prevents him from being present for his son. Like Sanderson, Robertson and Henderson invoke the oral tradition by using interdependent words and images where the voices of Edwin's father James and mother Lauren appear over pictures depicting the stories they tell. When Lauren starts telling the first story, her face also appears as a faint presence above the scene she is describing (7). The text also connects stories with scene to scene transitions between panels depicting the past being described and present when the story is being told. Sometimes the oral and frame stories bleed into each other in a single panel. For instance, when Lauren is telling the story of White Cloud lost in the forest during the smallpox epidemic, the trees in the panel act as gutters, dividing the single panel into separate subpanels through which both White Cloud and Edwin run (56, panel 1). Lauren's words—"Memories were hard to lose. Like scars, you see. There, always. Always a part of you. Even among the thick and endless trees. Even then, the black, clear. And he was lost" (56)—apply equally well to White Cloud, lost and alone in the woods, and Edwin, lost in a more figurative sense in the contemporary world. This panel blends the two stories so it is hard to tell which one is which, losing and disorienting readers along with the two Nehiyawak.



Similarly, James watching over Edwin after his suicide attempt, which was precipitated by his father's apparent rejection, connects to Thomas's death in the snow. James tells his son "The white of the sheets, the walls . . . like a blizzard, like there was no beginning and no end. I thought I'd almost done it again, Edwin" (121, panel 1). His simile comparing the walls to the blizzard links the two settings and is reinforced visually by having the wall of Edwin's hospital room blend into a snowbank where Thomas lies in the same position as Edwin in his bed, allowing for "no beginning and no end" between the two stories. James's mind connects his brother's death with his son's attempted suicide because he considers himself responsible for both. There is also a direct causal link between the two; Thomas's death lead to James's inability to parent his child effectively, an example of the intergenerational trauma caused by residential schools. Similarly, the smallpox

scars on White Cloud's wrist connect with the cutting scars on Edwin's, suggesting connections and causal effects between the two epidemics (63, panels 3 and 4). The current suicide epidemic is a direct result of colonization, which was made possible in part because the Indigenous people were weakened by new diseases that decimated nations, often before they even saw a European person. These connecting stories put Edwin's suicide in a larger cultural and historical context, and the images make the causal connections explicit. Canada's Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples "argued that colonization resulted in a historical power imbalance, concluding that high suicide rates among Aboriginal people are a result of severe social and cultural disorganization" (Cited in Health Canada). Understanding this history allows Edwin to contextualize his individual experience and to begin to heal.

The stories Edwin's parents tell are not just about the loss of culture and the negative effects of colonization. The same graphic elements that connect Edwin's suicide attempt to colonial history also emphasize the continuation of culture. There is little to causally connect the nineteenth century story of Bear leaving his brother Stone sleeping as he goes out on a raid during which he dies and the contemporary story of Lauren watching over her son after his suicide attempt; however, Robertson and Henderson explicitly connect the two stories by creating exactly parallel placement of frames on the page and a similar structure of the images within those frames for two sets of matching pages, asking the reader to look for connections in content (16-19). The compositional parallels in these four pages emphasize the continuation of Nehiyawi culture and structures. Although Stone's life and problems in traditional Nehiyawi society might be drastically different from Edwin's in the twenty-first century, they both face tragedy and they both have family who love them and protect them, which allows them to overcome tragedy. These obvious parallel visuals early on in the narrative encourage readers to be aware of other parallel compositions, sometimes between images that are not explicitly juxtaposed. Perhaps the most important of these is the connection between Stone's vision quest near the beginning of the novel, where he finds the eagle stone that acts as a recurring motif throughout the narratives (11, panel 1), and the final image of the novel where Edwin finds his

own vision that will allow him to move forward (126). These images, separated by over one hundred pages of text and two hundred years of narrative history, echo each other through similar posture of the central figure kneeling by a fire with arms outstretched, the color scheme, the composition of the fire reaching out from the bottom left corner of the frame, the placement of the full moon in the top center, the immediate family on the right hand side, and a spirit animal blending into and rising from the young man having the vision. Much has changed—Edwin wears a t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers rather than buck-

skin—but the images suggest that those changes are superficial. Edwin's strength and healing come from taking up his cultural heritage, as told in the stories, and his replication of the structures of those stories in his claiming of healing clearly illustrates not only the role of the oral tradition in the continuation of culture but also the possibilities of graphic forms of storytelling in connecting the past to the present and future.

While storytelling is central to both comics, both also suggest that the stories are not, in themselves, enough to save the young men's lives. Kyle and Edwin must take responsibility for their own lives and situations and simultaneously work to heal their communities in order to heal themselves. As Deanna Reder notes, traditional comic book interpretation about battles of good and evil "offers little to Sanderson's story precisely because, in Cree cosmology, Wesakecak does not represent the powers of good, just as good and evil are not considered polar opposites. In Cree cultural stories, good does not necessarily triumph over evil and the hero is not always triumphant" (186). The battle between Wesakecak and Wihtiko takes a turn away from the superhero genre when Wihtiko beats Wesakecak, who then turns the fight over to Kyle, who suddenly finds himself transported from the safety of his kitchen into the action of the story. The voice of the storyteller disappears and is replaced by dialogue between the characters. Without the specific guidance of the Elder, Kyle must find his own inner strength, which comes not from the hypermasculinity of the superhero genre but from his ability to self-define. The importance of a strong sense of identity in creating psychological health and preventing suicide among all youth is widely recognized. The "Acting on What We Know" report explicitly calls for the fostering of stronger senses of identity among First Nations youth (Health Canada). No matter how much Wesakecak, or a kindly Elder or his friend Sarah, tells Kyle that he is a worthwhile human with a lot to offer, it is only by finding his inner power that Kyle can save himself. He defeats Wihtiko with his words and control over his individual identity: "I don't wanna die! I don't believe in the things you say about me and everything I do! You don't get to choose that for me! You have no power over me! I don't wanna die!" (44-45). His strength is depicted not through suddenly developing the muscles of a

superhero but by a light that emanates from his body as he says these words, dissolves Wihtiko into nothing, and transports Kyle back to the quiet comfort of the kitchen table. The focus on creating an internal rather than external locus of identity in defeating suicide emphasizes that the healing lies not in the stories themselves but in what the listener does with those stories.

Similarly, Edwin's response to his family's stories in *7 Generations* is framed by statements of personal responsibility. When his mother tells him, "our past has shaped us all. You, me . . . all of us," Edwin's immediate reaction is that "The past isn't an excuse" (6), pointing both to his own responsibility in his decision to attempt suicide and his father's responsibility for abandoning him rather than risking being an abusive parent. At the end of the novel, Edwin gives his father back the eagle-shaped stone pendant that links all the narratives, saying, "This was yours once. When Mom gave it to me, she told me it had the power to heal, to help me on my journey [. . .] I want you to have this as you continue on your journey. So you can heal. So you can keep the pact. Because I forgive you" (127). When his father resists, saying that Edwin still needs it, Edwin responds "I'm going to find my own" (127). These are the last words spoken in the graphic novel. Ending the novel with this unitary first person statement suggests that, while the stories have helped Edwin understand his past and where he comes from, he is responsible for shaping his own future, finding his own path forward and his own iconography.

This focus on individual responsibility in preventing suicide seems, at first, to be more in keeping with western enlightenment concepts of individual

identity than with the communal understandings of identity and responsibility more commonly found in Indigenous cultures. However, individual and communal identities are no more a binary opposition than are graphic novels and oral storytelling. The "Acting on What We Know" study emphasizes the complex relationship between the individual and the community when it comes to suicide prevention for Indigenous youth. The authors criticize current programs' "focus on individual pathology and blaming the victim" and argue that since "Suicide is embedded in larger structural problems associated with colonization, including racism and bureaucratic control" then the cure to the epidemic must "focus on holistic health at individual, family and community levels," including creating and maintaining an understanding that cultural continuity is "a central component of youth identity, self-esteem, hope and being invested in living." The study goes on to suggest that this healing goes in both directions. When strengthened community ties help individuals to find "Positive reasons for living, coping skills, choices and decision-making," then the healed "youth can be integrated within First Nations communities as a valuable asset" strengthening the community that has strengthened them and helping others to find health (Health Canada). Both Edwin and Kyle have complex relationships with community. Their thoughts of suicide are precipitated by larger social issues; for this reason, their health depends on community healing, but their health can also contribute to that healing.

In *Darkness Calls*, Kyle's brokenness comes from lack of support at home and at school, and his healing depends not only on finding his own strength but also on making connections with others in order to support that strength. Deanna Reder argues that although Kyle does not have an active support system in his home life—his parents are depicted as alcoholics who belittle him (17, panel 4)—he finds strength through the Cree ethic "that the concept of one's relations is greater than the notion of the typical nuclear family, and includes not only extended nuclear family members but also spiritual relations" (181). Kyle lets the Elder into the house because the latter identifies himself as a relative, one Kyle has not met before. The Elder emphasizes the integration of community ties and individual power: "You've already found the strength to stand up to Wihtiko. So if you ever feel that darkness again, reach out to someone" (47). Reder argues that "The elder is not simply being a kind advocate. He is responding to a Cree belief that the community is in danger when someone suffers abuse" (185). Healing Kyle is part of healing the community. Suicide can be contagious; one of Kyle's triggers is thinking about Leonard Patchanak "who killed himself behind the hockey arena" and Jennifer Ahenakew "who walked into the woods after a party and froze to death" (14). Breaking the chain is necessary for stopping a suicide cluster in an individual community. Similarly, those who have healed can help others. The Elder tells Kyle, "Now it's your responsibility to pass [the power inside you] on to someone else. I know you can with your drawing and your wisdom" (47). Just as the Elder's storytelling has helped Kyle to find his individual strength, so Kyle's drawing—and by implication Sanderson's comic book—can pass on that strength to other individuals.

In *7 Generations*, Edwin's mother agrees with his assertion that the past is not an excuse but counters that "you should know where you came from" (7), which is why she tells him the stories that give him a context in which to heal. Similarly, Edwin giving his father the pendant is not a rejection of the family history it represents but rather an acknowledgement that his father needs it more, that the stories Edwin has heard are now a part of him, and that healing can move in both directions across generations. James's advice to his son that precipitates the passing back of the stone emphasizes cultural continuity with his claim that "all our ancestors live within you, our ways and our history" and his appeal to the concept that events—both positive and negative—"touch us for 7 generations" (126). He also stresses the limitations of those concepts: "What happened to you doesn't define you. *You* define you. We are not our yesterday, we are our today, our tomorrow" (126, emphasis in original). The stress on self-definition in this statement emphasizes individual freedom, but the switch from second person to first person plural emphasizes that that this self-definition cannot happen in a vacuum. Murray Sinclair, Chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, notes that the graphic novel's ending "makes the important point that reconciliation is about respect...and self-respect is where it starts" (*7 Generations* cover blurb). The decisions that Edwin makes as an individual are influenced,

though not set in stone, by the history of his family and his extended community. More importantly, his decisions will in turn influence both his family and his community. The stories of *7 Generations* teach Edwin not only where he has come from but also the generational echoes that his own actions will have.

The apparent tension between individual and community in both texts is more properly understood as interdependence. Just as the graphic novel form interacts with oral storytelling—depicting it, and drawing on it, adding new dimensions, but not replacing it—so the strength of the individual draws from and contributes to the strength of the nation. The "Acting on What We Know" study argues, "it is crucial that any program designed to prevent First Nations youth suicide should attempt to increase the sense of ownership and self-determination on the part of Aboriginal communities" (Health Canada). Both these comic books can be part of such a program. Their strength lies not so much in presenting overt anti-suicide messages—which would be rejected by savvy youth as simplistic pamphleteering—but in the storytelling strategies that connect the present to ongoing traditions, graphic novels to oral storytelling, and individual autonomy to community strength.

j udith l egga tt is an Associate Professor of English at Lakehead University. Her primary teaching areas are Indigenous literature and speculative fiction she currently researches Indigenous speculative fictio and has published on Zainab Amadahy, Thomas King, Lee Maracle, Drew Hayden Taylor, Salman Rushdie, trickster poetics, postcolonial pedagogy, *Twilight,* and *Jane Eyre.*

note S

1 [1] "Nêhiyawi" is the adjectival prefi form of what the people call themselves in their own language; "Nehiyawak" is the plural noun form. The commonly used term, "Cree," is an Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway/Chippewa language) word. The Nehiyawak are among the most populous First Nations groups in Canada, with territory that spreads from current day Alberta to current day Quebec. The two texts studied here depict Plains Cree peoples.

2 Of particular note in this context is the self-published comic book, *How to Save a Life,* by Jimmy Kakepetum, written in Anishinaabemowin as a high school project. It depicts a fictionalize account of Kakepetum's own struggle after the suicide of a childhood friend.

3 For further explanation of the types, uses, effects, and frequencies of the transitions that happen between panels, see Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* 70-81.

4 Deanna Reder compares the depiction specificall to Thunderbird (183). I see resemblances to both Proudstar brothers, especially to Warpath's blue facemask and single feather.

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BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

喀噠喀噠喀噠
(Kata Kata Kata)
Bei Lynn
Illus. Bei Lynn
Taipei: Art & Collection Group, 2014. 36 pp.
ISBN: 978-986-6049-66-8
(Picture book; ages 5+)

Kata Kata Kata The Building is a story about a treadle sewing machine, a little girl, and her grandmother. The machine amazes the little girl because it makes many beautiful things and answers her wishes. One day while her grandmother is halfway done making her drama costume, the machine stops working; therefore, the grandmother finishes sewing the costume by hand. Standing proudly on stage in the costume made by her grandmother, the girl realizes it is grandma who makes her wishes come true. To give her grandma a surprise, the girl and her father transform the out-of-order sewing machine into a table for the grandma to enjoy tea.

Told from the girl's point of view, Kata Kata Kata is a book full of sensory details. Through the words and pictures, readers see how the sewing machine works, hear its kata kata kata sound, smell the osmanthus, and feel the line of stitches on the cover. The endpapers show the motif of wallpapers in the girl's home, which set the mood for the story. The unrestricted lines and strokes match the girl's mischievous behaviors and imaginative mind. This book received the 2015 Feng Zikai Best Chinese Children's Picture Book Award.

Yi-Ching Su


Inga Borg
PLUPP och vargen
OPAL

Letters

An 'Invisibling' view of a Northern Landscape: Inga Borg's Plupp Series

Lydia Kokkola

A Shortage of Stories about the Sámi by the Sámi

The Sámi are the indigenous people of Sápmi – a region of Northern Europe (also referred to as 'Lapland') which spreads across Norway, Sweden, Finland and into North-Eastern Russia. Traditionally, the Sámi have been reindeer herders, which has resulted in a nomadic lifestyle following the seasonal movements of the herds. These movements have also affected the development of the language to the extent that not all variants are mutually intelligible. The languages are formally divided into Western (Germanic influenced) and Eastern (Finno-Ugric/Slavic influences) and are then further divided into subgroups, which are also geographically defined, albeit not in relation to the current national borders. The legal status of the Sámi and their languages differs in each of the nations that comprise Sápmi.

In Sweden, the Sámi have been officially declared the indigenous people of Sweden and their own parliament - Sametinget – was established in 1993, noticeably later than similar bodies in Finland (1973) and Norway (1989). Although the 'ting' in Sametinget officially means 'parliament' and the 31 members are elected, the conditions for the formation of Sametinget clarify that Sametinget has the legal status of an agency, and thus does not have the right to create laws which might be in opposition of the Swedish generally elected government in Stockholm. Under the 2009 National Minorities Act, the Sámi, along with the other four national minorities (Romani, Finno-Swedes, Torne-Valley Finns and Jews) have been granted four rights. These are 1) the right to use their language in all dealings with the authorities, 2) to receive support for their home languages especially in pre-school education and when elderly, 3) to enable their culture to develop and 4) to inform the majority population about injustice in the past. These rights have enabled the release of funding, a little of which has been directed towards the publication of children's literature in the national minority languages as children's literature supports the home language, especially in the transition from home into pre-school care, as well as enabling the culture to develop. Furthermore, a literary text can present an individual, and yet still provide insight into the self-defining features of the group, which is valuable for fulfilling the fourth right amongst non-indigenous children. Literary characters can challenge non-indigenous readers' stereotypes, provide information without causing feelings of embarrassment or awkwardness, and also create a sense of each group's heterogeneity, although the risk that such figures will be regarded as the norm is ever present.

According to Sametinget for Sweden, only ten books for children, written in one of Sámi languages for children have been published in the last five years. Using the national library database as their source, Sametinget report the existence of a total of just 191 children's books in Northern Sámi, 51 in Lule Sámi and 35 in Southern Sámi. This tiny collection of just 277 titles by Sámi authors for Sámi children is supplemented with a very limited number of books in translation. Seventeen of the 359 titles of children's books in a Sámi language housed in the Sámi national library in Jokkmokk are from Inga Borg's *Plupp* picturebook series. Borg, who was born near Stockholm, fell in love with the Northern Fells after her first visit in her teens and set her Plupp books there. The proportion of these books within

the small collection available for Sámi speaking children indicates that there is something about Plupp that resonates well with Sweden's indigenous peoples, and this letter endeavours to clarify why Borg's work has been so well received.

A Series Spanning Forty Years

The Plupp books have been translated into other languages as well as Sámi variants, including Danish, English, Finnish, Faroese, Greenlandic, Norwegian and German. The English versions were published by Warner (the publishers of Beatrix Potter's books), but the titles were changed to focus on the name of Plupp's friends (such as *Tramper the Elk*, *Bru the Brown Bear* and *Parrak the White Reindeer*) thereby reducing the significance of Plupp as a character and also the sense of the books as a collection which can be read in any order. Since not all the books have been translated into English and the titles of those that have been translated undermine the centrality of Plupp, the English translations in this letter are my own translations from the original Swedish. In addition to being widely translated, the appeal of the Plupp books is also evident in the ten minute cartoon television adaptations which appeared for the first time in 1968, and in 1970 Borg was awarded the prestigious Elsa Beskow Award for a children's illustrator.

The Plupp series comprises 27 picturebooks and chapter books created over a period of forty years. Plupp is an 'invisibling' – a being who is invisible to humans ('except you and I', explains the narrator at the beginning of nearly every book) – and whose speech sounds like "plupp, plupp, plupp": a language which all animals and birds can understand. Each of the books revolve around friendships formed between Plupp and the fauna of Sápmi. The first book, *Plupp and the Reindeer* was published in 1955 under the name Inga Grubbström. The early publication date is noteworthy as the attitudes towards gender, animal rights and the relationship between the human world and the Sápmi landscape still seem forward thinking fifty years later. Plupp, who is depicted as a small, human-like character with blue hair and an orange scarf has no gender. All the sentences are formed so that the there is no need to use a gendered pronoun, instead the name 'Plupp' is repeated. In the small picturebooks, this is achieved by incorporating a great deal of dialogue Plupp and the animals or by representing Plupp's thoughts, thereby enabling Borg to use 'I' rather than he/she. There are also a few chapter books about Plupp (*Plupp* (1964) *and Plupp Comes to Town* (1977), and yet even these more developed texts Borg manages to avoid gendered pronouns to refer to her protagonist. The animal friends, by way of contrast, are gendered and are nearly all male (the mother bear is the only significant exception to this pattern). Given all the effort Borg went to in order to keep her character gender neutral, and her stated conviction that this would help children of all sexes connect to the character, it is disappointing that the 1968 TV series was titled *Plupp och hans vänner (Plupp and HIS friends*; my emphasis), followed in 1983 with a book of the same name. The most recent book, *Plupp and the Lynx* was published in 2005 when Borg was 80 years old.

Sápmi Fauna: Tame, Wild, Carnivorous and Human

Plupp lives in a traditional Sámi turf shelter (kåta), which we see him build in the second book, beside a lake called Blåvattnet (Blue Waters). In most of the books, Plupp shares the kåta with his closest friends, the lemming Lämmel, and the stoat, Hermelin (the names are the Swedish names of the animals, in much the same way that A.A. Milne's character 'Piglet' is both a proper name and a common noun). Each story follows the more or less the same script: Plupp is engaged in some household task such as spring cleaning the kåta or gathering berries and mushrooms for the winter using traditional birch bark baskets, when an animal friend arrives and they all go off on an adventure. Variations on this script include Plupp's semi-hibernation in the winter. In *Plupp and the Lemmings* (1960), for instance, the story begins with father Lemming creating a series of nests for each of his many litters under the ground near Plupp's kåta. The eldest Lemming, Lämmel, becomes frustrated by the cramped quarters and burrows off on his own, only to find himself in Plupp's kåta, where he takes up residence.

As the summary of *Plupp and the Lemmings* reveals, the animal friends are anthropomorphised, Lämmel and Hermelin to the greatest extent since they live in Plupp's kåta and sleep in beds and eat the cooked meals Plupp prepares. Nevertheless, the books are illustrated to show very realistic animal poses: the

images of the moose calf learning to stand in *Plupp and the Moose (*1998), for instance, are decidedly lifelike. Furthermore, no species is reduced to a type: birds are not 'birds' – they are herons, sand-pipers, gulls, ptarmigan and so on – each with their own specific habits. Overall, Borg manages to introduce children to many aspects of animal life, without romanticising them. For instance, the lemmings in *Plupp and the Lemmings*, breed too extensively and then begin to migrate. Their trek is not romanticised. The character of Lämmel depicts the generally solitary nature of lemmings, which normally only meet to mate but which tend to overbreed when an excess of fodder allows. The frustration caused by over-crowding sets the lemmings off on their migratory trek. Lämmel floats to an island in the middle of Blåvattnet, where he enjoys his solitude until the waters freeze and he is able to visit Plupp again. The other lemmings are not as easily satisfied: they form a train of lemmings migrating across the Sápmi during which they are fed upon by birds of prey and other carnivores. "Now everyone had plenty of food, and could raise the young properly" (*Lemmings*, 21). The anthropomorphisation enables Borg to challenge the misconception that lemmings commit 'suicide'; instead she shows how the seemingly inexplicable desire to migrate is caused by over population and that the journey is simply too demanding for many of the older and weaker lemmings.

Borg's commitment to introducing children to the fauna of Sápmi is perhaps most evident when she portrays carnivores such as the bear and wolf and bear. In *Winter with Plupp* (1982) and *Plupp and the Bear Cubs* (1983), readers see Plupp feeling afraid for the first time. Plupp is depicted as being nervous in situations such as flying on the back of a migrating crane or being trapped in a case with a reindeer which is being flown to the zoo in Stockholm, but not afraid of the animals themselves. Plupp is only afraid of bears. During the winter, Plupp accidentally enters a cave where a mother bear is sleeping and her two cubs are suckling, which introduces children to the fact that bear cubs are born whilst their mother hibernates. Plupp leaves as quickly as possible, terrified. In the spring, Plupp meets the mother bear and her two cubs, and even agrees to babysit for a while. The bears greedily eat the berries Plupp has gathered and are thoughtless and clumsy as they rough-house together, and so Plupp is unable to relax except for a short scene in which the bear cubs and Plupp all snuggle up next to mother bear's tummy to sleep. Plupp's life is never placed at risk when he is with the bears, but their clumsiness and greediness leave him feeling nervous.

The real risks of being eaten are foregrounded in *Plupp and the Wolf* (1986). In this story, Plupp's close friends Hare, Lämmel and Hermelin hide from Plupp's other friends Snowy Owl and Arctic Fox as well as an unnamed eagle and wolverine who are out hunting. Plupp hides Lämmel under his scarf, but does not otherwise seem perturbed by the hunting activity, not even when he meets Lynx. Black Raven arrives to explain that ravens like staying close to wolves, but insists that wolves are not as dangerous as human things like trains and cars. (The term for carrion is not used; presumably the adult reading the story is expected to fill in this gap.) When Plupp finally meets the wolf, Borg introduces the notion of being in heat in a manner that is comprehensible to the 3-6 year old child for whom the book is marketed. The mating itself is omitted, but soon afterwards

> – Good day Wolf! People are talking about you a lot.
> – Hoooowl, only about me? Or have you heard about another wolf? A female wolf perhaps? Large and grand? I'm looking for someone like that. I am a male wolf. And I feel so terribly lonely. No wolf wants to be alone. I have been running mile after mile, day and night, searching.
> – Plupp, plupp, I am also alone. But I have friends that I meet sometimes. You have me now!
> – Woof, no, not friends! A wolf needs other wolves. To have a family, his own pack! No other wolves or animals. But listen! A wolf is singing! Hoow oow yow!
> – Oh, plupp plupp, look! A large and grand female wolf!
>
> At last, another wolf! She has also been running for miles, howling and calling for company. Finally he has heard the female wolf's song, recognised her scent, followed her tracks. The wolves nuzzled each other, wagged their tails and licked the corners of each others' mouths, barking with pleasure.
>
> (*Wolf*, 8-10)

Plupp sees the wolves building their den and raising their pups.

The stories about Plupp are exceptional in their forward thinking depiction of gender and animal life. They are also exceptional in their portrayal of human life in Sápmi. Borg began publishing the Plupp books in the 1950s, which was a bleak period in the history of the Sámi peoples of Sweden. During this period, the speaking of minority languages including Sámi was discouraged; they were even forbidden in the classroom and school playground. Libraries were forbidden from stocking minority language books, and children were encouraged to report on each other for speaking their home languages. In this bleak context, Borg's portrayal of the Sámi is particularly noteworthy. Humans do not appear in all the stories, and not all of those who appear are Sámi. The non-Sámi humans mostly live in the town Plupp visits on his raft or in Stockholm where Plupp temporarily lives in a zoo. Closer to home, Plupp also visits a farm run by Swedes who are depicted in clothing typical of the 1940s when Borg made her first trip to Sápmi. For the most part, however, the people Plupp meets in the fells are Sámi, although the verb 'meet' is misleading since Plupp is invisible to most humans (a few children are able to see Plupp). Dressed in traditional clothing, the Sámi are referred to by the correct Swedish term rather than the pejorative Swedish equivalent of 'Lapp', which was so widely used in the 1950s that Borg's choice of term reveals her pro-Sámi sentiments. As with her depiction of animal characters, Borg's depiction of the Sámi going about their daily lives is not romanticised. In *Plupp and the Reindeer Calf* (1997), Plupp befriends a reindeer calf who becomes separated from his mother when they are herded up to be counted and have their ears notched to indicate their owner. The reindeer's fears and Plupp's concern are very evident, but not over-dramatised. As with the depiction of other meat-eaters, Borg's Sámi are simply taking care of their young. In *Plupp and the Lemmings*, the lemmings' path takes them through a Sámi camp, and the children rush out to play with them. In doing so, they (inadvertently) save the lives of three of Lämmel's siblings who have initiated the migration. The moment of peace away from the other lemmings, helps the three brothers settle down. Borg does not push the obvious parallels with human group mentality on her reader, she simply allows Plupp to take the three lemmings home to Blåvattnet, where they are later joined by Lämmel. The Sámi also continue to go about their business unhindered.

Borg's 'live and let live' attitudes towards all the fauna, including the humans, who inhabit Sápmi, along with her insistence on respecting the integrity of each species and her clear love of the Sápmi terrain has resulted in a timeless series of books which promote Sámi values. She is not ethnically Sámi, nor is she able to write her books in any of the Sámi languages, but she has earned her place alongside those who have such connections.

lydia kokkola is Professor of English and Education at Luleå University of Technology, Sweden. She is currently involved in two research projects. The first on Reading in a English as a Foreign Language, is funded by the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation. This letter is part of the second: a project on school materials for and about Sweden's fiv National Minorities. This project involves a collaboration with Sensus (The Center for Human Rights) and Luleå Municipality.

r eFeren CeS
plupp Book S By inga Borg
All books were originally published by Bokförlaget Opal AB, which is based in Bromma, Sweden. The translations into North Sámi are published by Sámediggi in association with Sametinget.

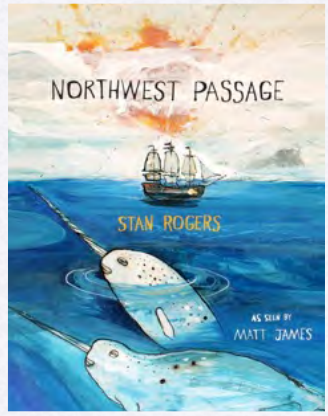
1955 – Plupp och renarna (Plupp and the Reindeer)
1956 – Plupp bygger bo (Plupp Builds a House)
1957 – Plupp gör en långfärd (Plupp Goes on a Long Journey)
1960 – Plupp och lämlarna (Plupp and the Lemmings
1964 – Plupp
1967 – Plupp reser till havet (Plupp Travels to the Sea)
1969 – Plupp och fågelberget (Plupp and the Bird Mountain)
1971 – Plupp åker flott (Plupp Goes Rafting)
1972 – Plupp reser till Island (Plupp Travels to Iceland)
1977 – Plupp kommer till stan (Plupp Comes to Town)
1982 – Hemma hos Plupp (At Home with Plupp)
1982 – Vinter hos Plupp (Winter with Plupp)
1982 – Plupp och vårflode (Plupp and the Spring Floods)
1982 – Plupp och midnattssolen (Plupp and the Midnight Sun)
1983 – Plupp och hans vänner (Plupp and his Friends)
1983 – Plupp och björnungarna (Plupp and the Bear Cubs)
1983 – Plupp i storskogen (Plupp in the Great Forest)
1986 – Plupp och havet (Plupp and the Sea)
1986 – Plupp och tranorna (Plupp and the Cranes)
1986 – Plupp och vargen (Plupp and the Wolf)
1989 – Plupp reser till sjöbo (Plupp Travels to a Lake Dwelling)
1990 – Plupp och Tuva-Kari i Kolmåreskog (Plupp and Tuva-Mari in Kolmåre Forest)
1991 – Plupp och all världens djur (Plupp and all the Animals of the World)
1996 – Kalas hos Plupp (A Party with Plupp)
1997 – Plupp och renkalven (Plupp and the Reindeer Calf)
1998 – Plupp och älgen (Plupp and the Moose)
2005 – Plupp och lodjuret (Plupp and the Lynx)

Sametinget website:www.sametinget.se
Plupp and his Friends (film) www.sfi.se/sv/svensk-film -tabas/Item/?itemid=36533&type=MOVIE&iv=Titles

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Canadian musician Stan Rogers composed the song "Northwest Passage" in 1981 to describe his own "passage overland, In the footsteps" of explorers and to remember John Franklin's disastrous 1845 expedition to find the orthwest Passage. In this stunning book, recipient of Canada's Governor General's Literary Award for Children's Illustration, Matt James combines paintings that accompany the song with illustrations about Franklin's quest to discover the Northwest Passage, a sea route to connect the Arctic region with the Pacific Ocean. The resulting visual east features colorful, expressive illustrations rendered in India ink and acrylic paint that depict the words of the song, the journey of Stan Rogers, and interesting facts about exploring the Northwest Passage. The song's chorus refers to John Franklin, who lost two ships, 134 men and his own life, in his failed attempt to discover the Passage. An annotated timeline begins in 6000 BCE with the arrival of the first Arctic peoples and ends in 2012 with the lowest recorded ice levels in the Passage. A double page spread presents a gallery of explorers. The music for the song and a list of materials for further information are included.

Evelyn B. Freeman



Northwest Passage
Stan Rogers
Illus. Matt James
Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2013. Unp.
ISBN: 978-1-55498-153-3
(Poetry and nonfiction all ages)

Social Change through Children's Books – An Indian Perspective

Nita Berry

Let me tell you a story of long long ago, perhaps over two thousand years ago, in South India. King Amarshakti was in the deepest despair. He was a wise ruler, but his three sons showed little inclination for learning. Indeed, they had resisted the efforts of a long line-up of teachers and exhausted all their resources. A minister in the king's court finally recommended the services of Vishnu Sharma, an eminent scholar of the city. The old man was summoned and promised a big reward if he could enlighten the dimwitted princes. Vishnu Sharma declined the prize, saying he did not sell knowledge for money. However, he assured the worried monarch that he would make the young princes masters of the art of practical living in just six months.

And so were presented Sanskrit literature's most ancient collection of fables—the *Panchatantra* or the "Five Chapters," which taught worldly wisdom within the framework of a lesson in a most attractive way. Woven around charming animal tales of intrigue, wit, greed, and friendship, the stories invariably contained a moral or message. Incredibly, within six months, the dull princes did indeed become shrewd masters of practical life. Vishnu Sharma's stories succeeded where serious teaching had failed! The wisdom of the *Panchatantra* has endured thousands of years and popular translations merged into Asian and European literature over the centuries.

Even in those far off days, the story was recognized as an ideal tool to impart knowledge and wisdom and to shape ideals and attitudes in accordance with social values. After all, a story was easily understood by all, and it entertained. It was a veritable sugar-coated pill of sorts.

Suno kahani! Suno kahani! Listen to my story! The call of the storyteller or *kathavachaka* was something everybody eagerly awaited. Every evening after the day's work was done, people young and old, men and women would gather in the village square ... And the storyteller would spin the most spell-binding tales of adventure and bravery, love and kindness, jealousy and deceit. He held a specially revered place in society for playing a vital role. In fact, he was the focal point for a closely knit community where the joint family was traditionally an indivisible unit. All entertainment and instruction were for this unit as a whole, and children were never treated as a separate entity. During festivals and special occasions, the storyteller narrated stories which were moral, religious, mythological, didactic, and entertaining. Many of his characters were archetypes who set examples. All human qualities were exaggerated to impress young and old.

Ancient India's schools, or *gurukuls,* were exclusively for princes and the elite. The oral tradition of storytelling was thus an effective means to reach out and instruct the vast receptive masses through a treasury of folktales, folklore, myths, and epics. A body of beliefs and values reflecting the wisdom of ancient India was handed down from one generation to the next through these valuable lessons.

Life in India remained unchanged for centuries. It was largely an agricultural economy with a rural population. The beginning of the twentieth century saw modern India make rapid strides in technology, industry, and agriculture. As a large population migrated to towns and cities seeking employment, rapid urbanization, the growth of slums, the beginning of nuclear families, and a fast multiplying population gave rise to diverse social and environmental problems and a host of changes in traditional value systems.

Today, our complex world is radically different from that of our ancestors. Many traditional values clash with modernity, and a loss of direction is apparent in every walk of life. New social problems have emerged: family and community tensions, insecurity, divorce, drugs, handicaps, problems of teenagers, alienation of old age, indiscipline, and corruption along with other pressing issues like lack of civic sense and hygiene, squalor and disease, depletion of natural resources, and degradation of the earth's environment. The emancipation of women has led to new issues of safety and gender equality. The child assimilates and understands this new reality. In a world of shifting values and morals, children see a lot of paradoxes in their own life.

Lessons in morality are seldom taught in schools today. In the absence of real role models either at home or in school, important and sensitive issues are being increasingly addressed through literature to deal with contemporary challenges. Children

desperately require books that will help them cope with the new reality through a frank discussion of their problems—stories that will help them come to grips with the bewildering world around and give them strength to fight their battles and hope to face the future.

Modern fiction usually revolves around thrilling adventures in contemporary settings, and it highlights many traditional values. Child heroes fight adverse circumstances, track criminals, and are confronted with problems which they eventually overcome. Right always wins over wrong. Sadly, today, much crime is directed against children. In any civilized society, when trusted guardians turn sexual predators and horrific incidents of rape and sexual abuse of minors hit newspaper headlines with alarming frequency, it becomes imperative for children of every age to be aware of their personal safety and to be able to protect themselves even within the close family unit.

A charming new picture book for the very young called *Stranger at the Farm* by Nilima Sinha underlines the importance of keeping one's distance from helpful strangers. Bela the little lamb wants juicy leaves from the top of a tree. She ventures into the wild alone and meets a stranger.

> "Can I help you?" asked the stranger kindly.
> "Thank you. But who are you?" asked Bela.
> "A friend! I have something very special for you," replied the stranger.
> "What is it?" asked Bela.
> "Come and see," replied the stranger.
> Bela was curious. She stepped closer to look.
> "See?" He held out a bunch of fresh green leaves, as shiny as the ones high up in the tree.
> "Want some?" he asked.
> "Oh, yes!" cried Bela, delighted.
> "Come over, then," invited the stranger. "Jump across that fence!"
> The leaves were really very tempting. Bela quickly jumped over the fence.
> The stranger suddenly grabbed her hand. He pulled her hard.
> "Help, help!" screamed Bela.

Bela's friends now raise the alarm and rush to her rescue. The wicked wolf is chased away.

> Mallu and Kallu hugged Bela.
> "Don't you know?" asked Mallu. "You should never talk to a stranger! All strangers may not be bad, but we must be careful."
> "And never take anything from someone you do not know," added Kallu.
> "You are right. I will remember!" said Bela.

It is not just strangers children must be wary of, but even close adults within the family circle. A recent novel for young teens called *Smitten* by Ranjit Lal dares to tackle this concern, which is really one of the great taboos in our society. Young Akhila's bedtime routine includes a glass of hot Ovaltine to make her sleep well since she suffers from violent nightmares, according to her fond stepfather. He has found this pretext to sleep in her room. Strangely, she never recollects any such nightmares, but her clothes are always in a state of disarray when she wakes up in the morning. One night, she throws her Ovaltine away and cannot sleep. To her utter horror, her father, who assumes she is fast asleep, fondles and kisses her while unbuttoning her night clothes... till she sits up with a scream. Is she going nuts, she wonders. Or could it be the "absolutely unthinkable—that Papa had done that?" Eventually, she confides her terrible suspicions to her friend Samir. Akhila's father tries to blackmail her emotionally—she's "a big girl now" and should submit to his advances—otherwise, something terrible might happen to her mother and brother. Things turn uglier as he drinks heavily one evening and tries to force himself on Akhila in the living room. A horrible accident and his fatal fall from a ladder come as a staggering climax to the story.

This gripping story is a real shocker, shaking us out of all passivity. Among Ranjit Lal's books for the young on serious social issues, his novel, *Faces in the Water* was an Indian entry for the IBBY Honour List in 2012. It focuses on the horrors of female foeticide and is written as an engrossing fantasy. The birth of a girl child was traditionally greeted with dismay in India because of dowry and other issues that viewed girls as liabilities. In fact, female foeticide is still practiced in some parts of rural India, leading to a skewed male-female ratio in these places.

Another path- breaking book for young teenagers is *I am Sona* by Manorama Jafa. Sona is diagnosed with HIV in a school medical test. She is also shattered to learn that she is adopted. The book discusses the deadly disease and its repercussions on lives, and it also provides information about its transmission while dispelling many myths.

Today, many books portray the equality of sexes through girl heroines and attempt to counter the syndrome which equates females with weakness and dull tasks as opposed to masculinity which is equated with toughness and achievement. There is a reversal of traditional roles in a picture book by Girija Rani Asthana called *Ma, Can I Help?* Young Gagan wants to learn to cook. Before a dinner party at home, mother, who is a doctor, is called suddenly for an emergency operation. The brother-sister duo plans a surprise. Gagan decorates the cake their mother just baked with sugar icing and arranges the spread for the guests. His sister Geeta, meanwhile, fixes an overheating hand mixer and connects speakers to the hard disc for some lively music. "I am sure you will be a good electrical engineer when you grow up," Gagan says admiringly.

Social concerns peculiar to Indian society like the problems of untouchability, caste, and communal tensions have figured in much of our fiction for children for every age group. A recent picture book called *The Lonely Princess*, is about Manika, the pampered princess whose servants rush to fulfill her every wish.

> In spite of all this, Manika was not happy. She felt VERY lonely. The King was busy ruling his kingdom and the Queen managing the grand palace.
> "Who shall I play with? I have no friends!" cried the princess one day.
> "Play with the princess!" ordered the King.

But courtiers do not make good playmates, of course. The unhappy princess meets the children of the palace gardener and enjoys climbing trees and cutting branches with them. They invite her home, and she follows them happily to their simple hut. Her fond parents are glad that their daughter is happy at last.

Friendship knows no barriers, they realize.

The Misfits by Kate Darnton is a heartwarming book about eleven-year-old Chloe and her new life in New Delhi, where her family has moved from Boston. Chloe desperately wants to be part of the crowd at her new school, even coloring her blonde hair with a permanent black marker! Students in school range from "cool" kids and super rich brats to students from the Economically Weaker Section like Lakshmi and Meher. They, too, are misfits here like Chloe. Lakshmi's father is the new school gardener, and she sticks out in class like a sore thumb. Everything about her is different—from her skinny frame, shabby uniform, and oily plaits to her broken English. The two misfits, Chloe and Lakshmi, soon bond over a common love for plants, animals, song, and dance despite their vast differences—and unexpectedly, Chloe finds a real friend.

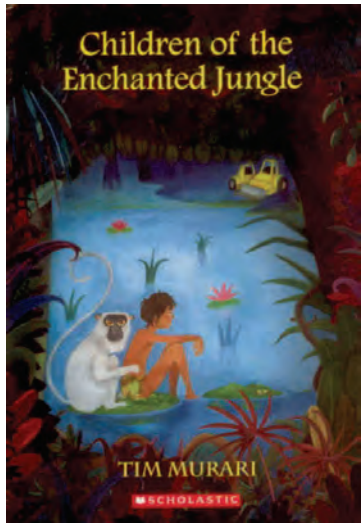
The Misfits is probably the first children's book to have been written against the background of the Right to Education Act—an important piece of legislation passed by the Indian Parliament in 2009 which made education a compulsory and fundamental right for all children between 6 and 14 years of age. Today twenty-five percent of every class must consist of children from disadvantaged groups in the neighborhood, and schools must provide them with free elementary education. The book reflects far-reaching social implications of this Act as classrooms today accommodate children from all social strata. The daughter of a school gardener could well be sitting next to the daughter of a tycoon. This could actually be the beginning of a social revolution in India as well as the start of strong friendships across class barriers.

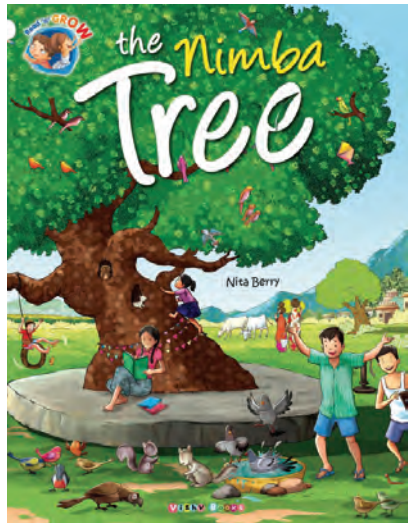
New initiatives in India like a "Cleanliness Drive" emphasize the importance of civic sense in a society obsessed more with personal hygiene. Social change can be possible only when we create awareness in our young. *What a Mess!* is written as a fantasy for young readers where all the garbage from the streets blows into one great tornado of rubbish:

> All of a sudden, the wind began to blow.
> It became stronger and stronger till it bent
> the trees and sent everything flying.
>
> Maya looked out in surprise. Hundreds of
> things were flying in the sky. Bits of paper,
> dirty rags, rotten eggs, plastic bags, banana
> skins... all twirled and danced around in
> the air!
>
> They blotted out the sun and it grew
> quite dark.
>
> Now everything swirled round and round
> in a spiral with the wind. Faster and faster
> the spiral went, like a giant funnel. It
> suddenly swept its way upwards, taking
> everything along with it. At the
> same time, a fearful wail filled the air... it
> was like a bad dream without an end.

The tornado of garbage eventually settles down and is devoured by big green bins. As Maya's world becomes clean and beautiful, she vows to always feed rubbish to the greedy bins.

Traditional Indian literature talks about strong family bonds that withstood the stormiest weather, respect for elders, tolerance, obedience, humility, sacrifice, and patience. With the breakup of the joint family system, these values are being brushed aside in a hard, competitive world. *Tringaling Ling* is a picture book for young children about helping elderly people. What happens when Grandma loses her mobile phone? The children help her look everywhere, but they cannot find it, while Bumpy the dog keeps barking all the time. Eventually they find Grandma's mobile in a funny place.





A grim consequence of the scientific evolution of the last century has been a ruthless invasion of natural resources and degradation of the earth's environment. There is reckless land use, and pollution of rivers and seas is fast destroying our marine life. The tranquillity of our forests has been disturbed and greedy poachers kill wild animals for their horns, skins and tusks.

Environmental concerns have been portrayed effectively in our books by well-known authors like Ruskin Bond and Deepak Dalal. One of the best loved storytellers in contemporary India, Ruskin Bond is a man of the mountains. He has been writing for over half a century on his solitary life in the hills with great empathy for its flora and fauna, and the simple hill people.

Deepak Dalal, perhaps India's first wildlife writer has penned a series of riveting adventure books set in unusual locales like the soaring mountains and deep valleys of Ladakh, and in islands like the Andamans and Lakshadweep. His deeply researched books stimulate a connection between children and the wild.

A delightful book, *Children of the Enchanted Jungle* by Tim Murari was an Indian entry for the IBBY Honour List in 2010. In this enchanted world, children coexist happily with creatures of the jungle and even speak the same language. However, they are not what we would call "normal" children. All are orphans, and each has an imperfection or handicap—a deformed leg, a blind eye, or else is very sickly. They have all been abandoned by their parents to be brought up by older children in the sanctuary of the jungle. A gripping tale of intrigue and adventure follows as the inhabitants of the jungle get together to checkmate their cruel enemy, the Man Animal, to save their home.

The Nimba Tree is all about protecting our trees and the environment. What happens when you cut down large trees for wood? There is no shade left to sit in, birds and animals lose their homes in the tree, and everything around dries up. This picture book won a prize at the World Book Fair in New Delhi last year for its attractive production.

"In a world torn apart by violence and intolerance, the language of peace and reason seems to have been drowned. Yet we cannot ignore or underestimate this voice. Communication and tolerance, sympathy and understanding can break the tallest barriers and build bridges of brotherhood, friendship and love." *The Road to Peace*, written by members of the Indian BBY, explores the theme of peace in different spheres of our lives—bloody wars, peace meets, quarrelling parents, communal riots—in a colourful mosaic of twenty-two stories.

Lighthouse in the Storm is another Indian BBY collection of twenty-four heart-warming stories on love and loss, disaster and personal grief, abuse and aggression. The book was an outcome of the AWIC Book Therapy Project, which believes in the potential of literature to soothe traumatized young minds

and to radiate hope. The stories seek solutions to fears caused by various calamities. Here you meet a school bully turned football hero, a killer wave that washes away all, the shadow of guns and suicide bombers, earthquakes and riots, deadly gases that fill the night air—all when a child's worst nightmares come true, turning his world upside down.

India has one of the oldest and richest living literary traditions. Under the Indian BBY's Literacy Project, our authors and illustrators have joined hands in the crusade for a better world by addressing diverse social problems through creative stories. *Transform childhood and transform the world.* These value-based stories which can help mold young minds promise to be game changers in our society.

Suno kahani! Listen to my story! Just as in ancient times.

This paper was presented at the 2nd Asia Oceania IBBY Conference in Putrajaya, Malaysia in May 2015.

Author and editor **nita Berry** has written short stories, picture and activity books, historical biographies and full length non-fictio for children of all ages. Many have won awards including the Shankar's Medal for *The Story of Time* (CBT). Some are being used in primary textbooks. Nita Berry is an Executive Committee member of AWIC*/ Indian BBY.

* Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children

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"Everyone Here Knows a Junior": Blackfoot Children and Their Books

Erin Spring

This column focuses on the early stages of my participatory, reader-response research with First Nations youth living on a reserve in Alberta. I am interested in the ways in which young readers reflect on their social cultural, and place-based identities while reading culturally relevant, local fiction I focus on the methodological design of my project, which includes reading discussion groups and the creation of place-journals. I reflect on the p ocess of finding suitable esearch texts.

When I recall the books that shaped my early reading identity, I recognize that the most influential texts were ones where the pages of the book could be made meaningful on a personal level—usually through identification with a character's sense of place or by perceiving the place as somewhere I had been, or as a reflection of the rural world that I lived and breathed in. I caught glimpses of myself in Kit Pearson's *Guests of War* (1993) trilogy, in Cynthia Voight's *Tillerman* (1981) series, and in Tim Wynne-Jones' evocative depictions of rural Ontario in *The Maestro* (1995). These texts worked as mirrors, allowing me to better understand myself and the world that I was part of. Louise Rosenblatt explains this encounter with a text as a practice of "recreation" wherein the reader, drawing on past experiences, undergoes a "personally experienced evocation of the literary work" (179). As a reader I "recreated" texts (made them personal) by infiltrating them with my version of the world.

I recognize that I was (and still am) in a position of privilege as a reader. Reflections of my identity are readily available in texts. I do not have to look far to find stories about white, Canadian girls who grew up in a small town. In his reading memoir *The Child*

that Books Built (2002), literary critic Francis Spufford recalls wanting (through reading) to "see things [he] never saw in life. More than [he] wanted books to do anything else, [he] wanted them to take [him] away" (82). Like Spufford, I appreciate the importance of the text that takes me away or the one that that shows me aspects of the world (or myself) that I cannot access through any other medium. While I understand the value of books being windows into other worlds, I worry that young readers, especially those who are marginalized, cannot access books that reflect their experiences and identities. In a recent article in The Guardian, Myles Johnson—the author of *Large Fears (*2015), which features a Black, queer boy—writes that "when there's no reflection of the self within any text, then there's no understanding of the world as a truly validating and safe place." All readers need texts that validate their world.

Research Context

I am currently a Postdoctoral Fellow working with Aboriginal youth who live and attend school on a reserve in Alberta. My project emerged out of a concern that First Nation readers are not having opportunities to read and discuss culturally relevant fiction. Contemporaneously, within children's literature and reader response scholarship, there is an omission of First Nation voices in our understanding of the ways in which young adults (YAs) respond to and engage with fiction. As my research shows, using culturally-relevant and local, place-based fiction has the potential to encourage adolescents to have discussions about their cultural, social, and place-based identities within and beyond the text (Spring, "Place and Identity," "Where are you from?").

In a Canadian context, there is a particular urgency for such research. In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released its response to the Indian Residential School legacy. From the 1880s to the mid-1990s, approximately 150,000 Aboriginal children were forced to attend residential schools funded by the federal government and run by churches. Children were removed from their families and communities and were stripped of their languages, traditions, and cultural identities. Many experienced emotional and physical abuse. In its report the TRC calls this experience cultural genocide, defined as "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group" (1). As a result, "families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity" between generations (1). In an attempt to "redress the legacy of residential schools" (1), the TRC has outlined ninety-four recommendations and calls to action. In contemporary Canadian communities, ongoing colonial practices of assimilation and appropriation continue to impact Indigenous cultures. There is a need for reconciliation work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, including—and perhaps most urgently—young people.

Research Questions and Project Design

My current project is a community-based, participatory study with a group of twelve and thirteen-year-old First Nation youth who live and attend school on a rural reserve. Six female and four male readers have agreed to participate. While my project began in the fall of 2014, many ethical and logistical issues had to be addressed at the university and community level. I first met my participants in the spring of 2015. Within this column, I share my project design, reflect on my choice of texts, and offer some early observations about these young readers. While I am not able to offer any hard findings at this time, I hope that my early contemplations will be insightful for those who are working with children and youth, particularly those who are marginalized.

My participants have been reading and discussing several Indigenous texts. My overarching research aims are: a) to understand the ways in which these readers' identities are tied to their understanding of social, cultural, and physical places; b) to understand how these same readers reflect on fictional constructions of place and identity; and c) to understand how and if the experience of reading culturally relevant, local fiction incites these readers to question the role of place within their lives. These questions respond to the TRC's recent findings, which call for ways of integrating Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms as well as for building student capacity for intercultural understanding.[1]

Three methods of data collection are being used: reading discussion groups, the creation of place-journals, and semi-structured interviews. Firstly, I have organized a series of reading discussion groups during lunch and homeroom time. The teacher that I am working with recruited ten readers

she felt would benefit from the project or would be keen to participate. We plan to continue the reading groups over the current academic year (2015-2016) and possibly beyond. As outlined in the Tri-Council Policy on Aboriginal Research, demonstrating long-term commitment to the community is a valuable part of my work as a non-Indigenous scholar within an Indigenous community. I will engage in meaningful and ongoing relationships with my participants and the community members through the analysis and dissemination process.

I have conducted reading discussion groups in two previous research projects and have created them to be a safe space for young readers to share their responses. In my experience, young readers appreciate the openness and flexibility of this forum, where they are free from the structure of classroom or curricular demands (Spring). Each participant was provided with the text prior to meeting as a group. The discussion groups became a space for my participants to share their responses to the research texts. While I was present at these sessions, my role was minimal. I did not position myself as an expert but rather engaged in dialogue, questioning, and conversation alongside the youth (Wells; Chambers). Even if they had not finished the book, the participants felt as though they could contribute to the discussions as the conversations often moved beyond the text into discussions about their everyday lives or about other texts. Steven Bigger and Jean Webb explore how discussion group settings revolving around texts have the potential to "foster a sense of place" because young people "re-story their pasts" (140) through these discussions, a sentiment shared by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan who argues that language is a vital aspect of constructing our place perceptions.

Secondly, my participants are creating a place-journal containing visual and written responses, both to the text and to the ways in which they consider place to be influential within their own lives. Visual methods are useful for accessing a range of stories and experiences that are often difficult to articulate verbally (Cele; Rose). In their journals, however, I also offered my participants the opportunity to create written narratives (Azano; Charlton et al.). I provided my participants with a list of possible entries to consider (e.g., sketching, photo-elicitation, mapping) but left the decision of what to create ultimately up to them. The place-journals will allow my participants to develop their own self-representations by sharing stories that they value.

Lastly, when the reading discussion groups have finished, I will conduct semi-structured interviews with each participant. These interviews will facilitate an interpretation of my participants' understandings of the world, accessed directly through their point of view and in their chosen words. One-on-one interviews will allow each participant to explore information that might be of personal nature and will afford me an opportunity to work with each participant on their own. The interviews will be a space where I can refer back to what I already know about these participants through the discussion groups and their place-journals.

Finding the Right Text

Choosing the "right" texts was a difficult first step. I wanted my chosen texts to encourage my readers to discuss their cultural, social, and place-based identities. It was therefore necessary for the texts, as closely as possible, to reflect my readers' experiences of the world using accurate, non-stereotypical representations of what it is like to be an Indigenous adolescent.

I began by reading blogs like Debbie Reese's American Indians in Children's Literature. Debbie is a member of the Nambé Owingeh Tribe in New Mexico. The aim of her blog is to discuss texts that "accurately portray Native people and our nations ... in all of our humanity." She explains,

> far and away, what Native kids get are fun house mirrors like the ones we see at carnivals, fairs, and theme parks. The ones that take your image and distort it. That make it look funny. Or uber cool. Or scary. Or stupid.

While warning of texts that do not offer accurate representations of Indigenous peoples, Reece offers insightful reviews of texts that are, in her mind, authentic. I also referred to *Reading While White: Allies for Racial Diversity and Inclusion in Books for Children and Teens.* This blog is written by a group of White librarians who address themselves as "allies in the ongoing struggle for authenticity and visibility in books" and who feel that they "have the responsibility to change the balance of White privilege." Blogs such as these

celebrate and disseminate information about diversity in children's fiction.

Before selecting my texts, I met with the classroom teacher and librarian to discuss some options. These conversations were an important step in the research process because I wanted to ensure that the school was involved in the design of the project—getting their approval of the research texts was essential. I had originally contemplated using Richard Van Camp's *The Lesser Blessed* (1996), a coming-of-age story about a sixteen-year old Dogrib Native named Larry. Based on the age and reading ability of the students, it was not appropriate. The school library had some class-sets of novels that I could choose from, most of which were written by non-Aboriginal authors. While some included First Nation characters or themes, the representations were often stereotypical.

I decided to begin with Sherman Alexie's award-winning *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* (2007), which is illustrated by Ellen Forney. Alexie is a member of the Spokane/Coeur d'Alene tribe who grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation near Washington. In 2014, Alexie's text was listed as one of the top ten most frequently challenged books for its offensive language, sexual content, and violence (Schaub). Alexie has since spoken about the dangers of censorship, particularly in relation to texts that represent minority populations. He writes,

> when some cultural critics fret about the "ever-more-appalling" YA books, they aren't trying to protect African-American teens .... Or Native American teens growing up on Third World reservations ... they are simply trying to protect their privileged notions of what literature is and should be. They are trying to protect privileged children. (Alexie, "Why the Best Kids Books Are Written in Blood")

Based on my knowledge of the students' current and past reading habits and choices, I decided that Alexie's text was one that my participants would have found and read on their own, independent of this project. While Alexie's protagonist, Junior, is fourteen, and therefore slightly older than my readers, several participants were reading above their grade level, and the librarian heartily approved of its use in the project.

Some Early Reflection

Within this subsection, I share some of my early observations, drawn from my time with the participants thus far. At this point, each of the ten participants has read the research text. While I needed to ask probing questions in the first instance (i.e., Did you like this text? What did you like about it?), the participants quickly began conversing without direct prompts. At our first meeting, one of the participants asked if I could read the first few chapters aloud, to refresh their memories. When I read the line "'Junior, sweetheart,' Mom said, 'I'm sorry, but we don't have any money for Oscar'" (Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary* 10), the participants began to laugh. I paused, asking them what was so funny. One of the students explained, "We all have an uncle, cousin, brother, or brother's friend named Junior. Everyone here knows a Junior. And all of our mom's say "sweetheart."

Alexie's novel details Junior's coming-of-age on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Early in the novel, we learn that Junior has decided to leave the reservation school in order to attend the all-white school in Reardan:

> "Us Indians were the worst of times and those Reardan kids were the best of times.
>
> Those kids were *magnificent.*
> Those kids were *everything.*
> Those kids were *beautiful.*
> Those kids were beautiful and smart.
> Those kids were beautiful and smart and epic.
> They were filled with hope.
>
> I don't know if hope is white. But I do know that hope for me is like some mythical creature" (50).

Junior leaving the reserve for Reardan, and his best friend Rowdy's reaction to his decision, incited a conversation that went beyond the text. Several of the participants explained to me that they, too, have friends who attend school "in the city," particularly if their parents work there. One of the male participants is thinking of leaving next year to "be part of

the track team." When he shared this with me, a female participant responded, "we have a track, here."

I have not had an opportunity to look through their place-journals, but I have observed the participants with their journals in hand. A female participant shared with me that she is writing an autobiographical narrative about her cousin who committed suicide last year. Another female participant asked if she could do her own replication of Forney's illustration (seen on page 57), where Junior is split down the middle. One half of the page represents his "White" identity, the other half his "Indian." Forney's illustrations accentuate Junior's identity struggles, particularly the questions he has about his culture, race, and identity. The graphic elements, in particular, have spurred my participants to have discussions about their own identities as youth living on a reserve. Like Junior, many of them wonder whether they will need to leave the reserve and what cultural implications this will have for them and for their families.

Alexie's depiction of Junior's life on the Spokane reservation, albeit different from theirs, is already encouraging my readers to engage in conversations about where they live and what it is like to be from there. The text is helping my participants visualize their own diversity by allowing them to (finally) catch glimpses of themselves within the pages.

Our Reading Fieldtrip

When I initially approached the principal about my project, she was keen to increase her student's access to texts. The librarian explained that there is a library on the reserve that recently opened; access is complicated, however, as it is located in a neighboring community. None of the students in my book group had ever had a library card, and only one had visited the public library on the reserve. The city library is over eighty kilometers away, again reducing the probability of access. In the week preceding summer holidays, I arranged to take my readers into the city on a "reading fieldtrip." This outing was organized with the classroom teacher, who accompanied us. We agreed on several stops including the public library, Chapters, a used bookstore, and two comic book shops. Part of our objective was to show the participants how to purchase or borrow books for their summer holidays. At the library, the students were registered for library cards. The librarian took them on a tour of the children's and YA section, demonstrating how to find and sign-out books. My funding budget included purchasing one text at Chapters for each student to read before September, as per the principal's wish.

Strengths and Limitations

Readers make texts personal by infiltrating them with versions of their world. Margaret Mackey makes an explicit connection between reading and place, writing, "reading fiction and mapping one's local surroundings work in tandem" (423). Despite much excellent work in the fields of reader response and children's literature criticism, there is a gap in the conversations we are having about what it means to be an Aboriginal YA reader in today's world and how places—social, physical, fictional, and real—are navigated and experienced from their perspectives. In order to respond to the calls for action addressed in the TRC, this gap in the literature must be filled.

My decision to use culturally relevant fiction stems from my belief that individuals who have a strong grounding in their cultures and histories are empowered to contribute to society in meaningful ways. This in turn promotes resilience and reduces vulnerability. While some texts dangerously perpetuate the exclusion of First Nation voices, there are a number of texts that have the potential to help shift First Nations and non-First Nations relations towards more ethical ones. I argue that reading and discussing culturally relevant, place-based fiction texts encourages First Nation readers to celebrate their identities and to analyze their worlds.

Over the past year, I have earned the trust of Elders, community members, and other gatekeepers; navigated numerous political and ethical boundaries; and began working with a group of young people who do not necessarily share my cultural background or worldview. As a non-First Nations researcher, I recognize power imbalances and the fact that academic research has been used to colonize. I have worked diligently to ensure that my research is child-centered, ethical, and focused on the lives, experiences, and values of my participants, their cultures, and their community.

The potential limitation of my project is that my findings will represent the temporal dimensions of place, place-identity, and the reading experience. My findings will be bound to these participants liv-

ing in these geographical locations, reading these texts, in these precise moments of time. However, my findings could be extrapolated to other historically marginalized populations or groups. My project design will work as a model for researching with young readers in diverse international contexts.

erin Spring is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Institute for Child and Youth Studies at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta. Erin has a PhD in Education from the University of Cambridge. Her work focuses on the intersections of place and identity construction in the lives of Canadian adolescent readers.

note S

1 http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

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DOGS & Their Books

"Book Dog and Astrid Lindgren": A Project to Promote Reading Children's Literature

Helene Ehriander

A childhood without books would not be a childhood.
(Astrid Lindgren)

Programmes to promote literacy by letting a child read aloud to a specially trained dog and its handler have become increasingly popular in many countries, above all in the USA and Britain, through an organization called R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dogs). In Sweden, the word *läshund* (reading dog) was included in the list of new words for 2012 by the Swedish Academy. It is a method intended to increase reading enjoyment by letting children read to dogs. In the reading situation, the dog handler should be able to meet the children at the stage where they are in their reading development, and, with the help of the dog, give the support the child needs just then in order to make reading easier and associate it with something nice. This means that the children look forward expectantly to the reading exercises since the dog functions as a motivator. The dog gives security and serves as a reward while the dog handler, with the aid of the dog, can assist the child to a deeper understanding of texts. In later reading situations when the dog is not present, the memory of the dog can make reading and the reading situation calmer and more relaxed for the child.

* * *

Livia, eight years old, has just finished reading her first book, *Mimmi and the Pup*, by Ann Gomér (*Mimmi och valpen*, 2015).

"That was fun," she says. "And the book was good!"

During the summer holidays, Livia has improved her reading together with the book dog Arabella. Roughly twenty minutes a day, Livia has read to Arabella about how Mimmi's new neighbor has acquired a dog that he cannot look after. Livia is a great animal lover with a lot of empathy, and she was concerned, just like Mimmi in the story, by the way the neighbor kept the pup tied in the garden at night.

"There are people who get pets and then don't bother about them just because they get tired and don't think the animal is fun any longer," said Livia. "If you have an animal you should look after it!"

When Mimmi is allowed to take care of the pup and the neighbor turns out to be nice, Livia smiles contentedly. In the last picture, Bonita the pup is lying in Mimmi's bed and Livia can breathe out—both because the story had a happy ending and because, together with Arabella, she has begun to overcome her difficulties in reading. Now we are waiting for the second book in the Mimmi series, and in the meantime, we read *Who Wants Sumpen?* by Gun Jacobson (*Vem vill ha Sumpen?*, 2014)—a picture book published in aid of Hundstallet (The Dog Stable) and the dogs they take into care there. In the book, the dogs themselves talk about their lives, and I am convinced that Livia will be happy when she has finished reading her second book this summer because Sumpen and his friends come out well at the end.

When Livia started reading to Arabella, she read letter by letter—"ddddd ooooo ggggg"—and then she put the letters together—"dog"—and took a deep breath before she started on the next word. The reading went very slowly, and she held the covers of the book in a tight grip with both hands; however, she understood exactly what she was reading, and she was very careful not to drop any letter. She showed that she understood what she was reading by commenting on the action of the story in a reflecting way. The only word that Livia recognized visually as a group of characters on the first occasions was "mother," but after just a couple of days, she could also read "pup" and several short words like "and" and "but" along with the names of the characters in the text, recognizing the shape of the words. Now she reads more phonically and recognizes even more words as visual groups of characters, which means that reading is faster and easier. She can take her hand off the book to scratch Arabella or point to something she finds interesting in the illustrations.

Livia has also expressed herself in an interesting way about her conscious reading strategies. Livia finds it difficult to tell *b* from *d*, but when she read "closed the door" she explained to me that she "tries to make it fit together"—that what you close is a door and not a "boor," and from this she draws the conclusion that it must be "door" even if she is unsure at first about which of the letters it is. As for Arabella, Livia says: "I know that she's listening because when it gets exciting she licks my hand!" Not a single day during the summer holidays has Livia said that she does not want to read to Arabella. When Arabella arrives, her rug is already in place and Livia is waiting with the book, immediately finding the place where the reading stopped the day before. Although the reading requires a lot of effort and patience, Livia is motivated. Both she and her brother hug and kiss

Arabella when she comes, and it is obvious that the little book dog is always welcome and longed for.

At least three components that contribute positively to the reading situation and to Livia's reading development can be identified. The first is Arabella the book dog, who loves her work and who immediately jumps up to lie between Livia and me to listen to the reading. The dog is not judgmental, which means that this reading situation does not resemble the stressful school situation, in which Livia found the reading more demanding than pleasurable, experiencing more failure than joy. When Livia's parents asked her about the difference between reading to Arabella and reading in school, Livia answered, "It's the *feeling!* It's so terribly nice to read to Bella. When I read to my teacher in school I'm just wondering all the time if I'm doing it right."

During the summer, the reading mostly took place outdoors, and it has been a relaxed situation in a calm setting. Livia loves animals and has well-formulated views of the value of animals and how they should be treated. She is convinced that they can both think and feel, and therefore, she also treats Arabella with respect, talks to her, and presumes that the dog is listening and participating in the reading. The relationship between Livia and Arabella builds on friendship and community. They have a shared interest, they are friends, and they have a nice time together during the reading session. Arabella is happy, and sometimes she leaves her sitting position for a while to lie on her back and roll around grunting with pleasure. Livia draws the conclusion that there is something in the text that the dog reacts to and interprets for her: "Now Arabella probably thinks it's getting scary," she says, scratching the dog encouragingly on the stomach.

The second component is myself in my capacity as dog handler and as an adult with a friendly interest. I make no demands on Livia either; we just have a nice time together and we are both pleased

with the progress she is making and with the fact that the book we are reading is good. Both Livia and I like dogs and good stories, and this helps to make the reading situation more relaxed. I often find myself cheering Livia on with delight when she reads correctly: "Good! Really good, Livia! That was a very hard word!" The Swedish author Rose Lagercrantz has said that "reading aloud is when two hearts beat in time," and when Livia, Arabella, and I read together, there are *three* hearts beating in time! The third component is, of course, the book. I decide what we should read, and I have chosen books which I like myself and which I believe will interest Livia; it turns out to be true. The first book we read together, Mimmi and the Pup, is an easy book from a publisher that specializes in easy-to-read literature—Nypon. The other book, about the dog Sumpen, is a picture book with longer words and harder language, but I judged that the important content would outweigh the degree of difficulty. The stories proved to be so interesting to her that they gave motivation, making it worth the effort to read. During the reading Livia has expressed an interest in "how it will end" and "what will happen next," and after each page or spread, she has commented on the plot and shown evident engagement. She often enlists the aid of the illustrations to discuss the text and to understand individual words and contexts but also to get support for her own thoughts about the text. She has also taken up threads from the text and pursued the line of thought from what she has read, spontaneously putting the text in relation to her own values, experiences, and knowledge. She has done this both during the actual reading session and from day to day. Arabella is a stray dog that I adopted from Spain. She was in a dogs' home where they said that no one wanted her because "she was so ugly"! This often raises thoughts in the minds of the children as we read, and they often, just like Livia, get upset that someone is judged like this, on the basis of their appearance.

As I sit writing this, we have just entered the month of August and the reading has been going on for about a month. Then a text message arrives from Livia's mother telling me that Livia has suddenly started using her ability to read in everyday situations. In one afternoon, she has read out a recipe attached to the fridge door and written a note to her brother. Letters are no longer something that Livia seeks to avoid; she has discovered their potential as a way to find out things and to communicate with others. My goal is that, by the autumn, we shall have read one of the best children's books I know: Eva Ibbotson's last book *One Dog and His Boy* (2011), a story that is like the jeweled crown of a rich and versatile oeuvre and discusses precisely the questions about childrens' and animals' rights that interest Livia.

* * *

The project "Book Dog and Astrid Lindgren" at Linnaeus University, Sweden, seeks to stimulate reading and to spread knowledge about children's literature in general and Astrid Lindgren's works in particular. The guiding idea is to let children read to dogs. The main target groups are children with difficulties in reading, writing, and speaking; children with low motivation for reading; children who already find it fun to read and who are prepared to read more; and adults who are in contact with these children. The project is organized in a collaboration with the Swedish Dyslexia Association (Dyslexiförbundet), the Hundsam[1] association, and schools and libraries, primarily focusing on children aged between 6 and 13.

In the project "Book Dog and Astrid Lindgren," we have adjusted the method and the project to suit our Swedish school and library system. We are working in the project to introduce educational dogs in schools, mainly by training teachers and librarians as dog handlers. Moreover, the project "Book Dog and Astrid Lindgren" is in line with the four main principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child and follows the guidelines drawn up by the Asthma and Allergy Association. During the first two years of the project, we have started training twenty dogs and their handlers and have begun working at several libraries and schools. A test to select suitable dogs has been developed. Besides being inspired by Astrid Lindgren's humanist values, the one-year training is also supposed to be in keeping with the current curriculum for compulsory school and the work with basic values advocated there.

The training also incorporates a perspective of gender and diversity where opportunities are given for everyone to obtain an equal education regardless of their circumstances. It is important for us that the project should be well thought-out in every detail

and permeated by high quality and absolute security. In most areas today, there is great impatience and hope for quick solutions to all kinds of problems that arise, but it is important to let the training of the dogs and the development of the method take time for the results to be as good as possible in the long term. It is a human right to be able to read and allowed to read. Reading is a democratic issue and an essential condition for participation in society if people are to be able to have any influence over their own lives, their environment, and the development of society as a whole. Moreover, reading is a source of profound and lasting joy. In Astrid Lindgren's spirit, we want to uphold the outlook on children, literature, and animals that she advocated and the humanist and democratic values expressed in her life and works. Astrid Lindgren was a true ambassador for reading throughout her life. She often declared how much books and reading had meant for her thinking, her development, and not least of all, for her own works. Astrid Lindgren also pleaded in many contexts for the shared joy of reading aloud.

The project is also in dialogue with current research and engaged researchers in pedagogics, teaching and learning, the learning of reading, linguistics, book procurement, children's and adolescents' literature, ethology, and research on the beneficent effects of animals on humans.

There is great interest in the project "The Book Dog and Astrid Lindgren," and we look forward to the coming years when we shall continue training dog teams, working with the dogs in schools and libraries, collecting and analyzing collected research material, and evaluating the project.

For more information see: www.bokhunden.se
Facebook: Bokhunden och Astrid Lindgren

note S

1 Hundsam is a non-profi association seeking to create a platform for the development of service dogs used as an educational resource in schools and other activities. Hundsam is aimed at associations and companies working in the field people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), their families, and people working with ASD. Hundsam focuses on the developmental effects that a dog can have for people with ASD.

h elene ehriander is associate professor (Swedish) at the department of fil and literature at the Linnaeus University (Växjö, Sweden), and the project leader of Läshunden (Reading Dog). Ehriander's research is mainly oriented towards children's literature. She is on the board of the Astrid Lindgren Society and secretary of the Martha Sandwall-Bergström Society. Ehriander is currently writing a book on Astrid Lindgren as an editor at the publishing house Rabén & Sjögren and completing a study on Astrid Lindgren.

Reviews

Books on Books

Compiled and edited by Jutta Reusch and Christiane Raabe

Chri Stiane r aa Be is the director and **j utt a r eu SCh** is the head of the library services of the international youth Library in Munich, g ermany.

De verbeel Ders. NeDerla NDse boekillustra tie iN De twi Ntigste eeuw .
(Book Illustration in the Twentieth Century in the Netherlands). Ed. by Saskia de Bodt. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2015. 327 pages.
ISBN: 978-94-6004-216-4.

In adult as well as in children's literature, illustrations play an important role. Leafin through this comprehensive and richly illustrated history of Dutch illustration, anyone can tell that illustrations can deeply affect the viewer (and reader). Many of the images may evoke pleasant recollections of reading a certain book, memories often linked to the illustrations rather than to the words.

In six chronologically ordered chapters, the book discusses the importance of the illustrated book throughout the twentieth century. The overview includes not only children's books, but other publishing sectors as well. A striking observation is that the illustrated book for adults occupies an important position at the turn of the twentieth century, only to be marginalized (due to limited numbers of copies) as the twentieth century progresses. By the fina chapter, which covers the period from the

1990s up until 2014, the illustrated book turns out to have vanished completely from the adult market (with the notable exception of the graphic novel).

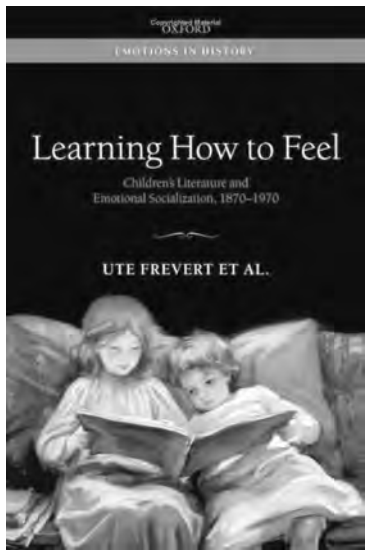
Each chapter focuses on one of the six periods under scrutiny, each headed by a well-structured introduction. In these historical introductions, factors are foregrounded which relate to social and political evolutions as well as developments within printing technology. In addition, ample attention is paid to the often overlooked programmes in art education, and its impact on the development and status of illustration. This also includes the specifi influenc particular teachers had on their pupils and the subsequent generations of illustrators.

These introductions are followed by short, three-to-four-page illustrator portraits of the main artists mentioned in the overview (whose names are printed in bold in the running text). These portraits, written by various authors, give further depth to the introductory sections. Instead of including as many illustrators as possible, Saskia de Bodt opted to present only those illustrators who made a substantial contribution to the art of book illustration. Artists such as M.C. Escher and Kurt Löb appear side by side with Rien Poortvliet and Anton Pieck or Max Velthuijs and Dick Bruna. The exemplary discussions of their work and contribution adds an extra dimension to the historical overviews.

Impressively, art historian Saskia de Bodt demonstrates how the developments of the illustrated book for adults on the one hand and for children on the other are interwoven and cannot be considered independently. Not surprisingly, the history from 1990 until 2014 (Chapter 6) has yet to be put in perspective. The distance in time to this period is too short and does not allow for clear trends to be discerned.

A book about illustrations would not work without illustrations, of course. Throughout the text, references are made (in a different color and between square brackets) to specifi images. Graphic designer Brigitte Slangen put a lot of care into the design and layout, making sure the book itself would be a feast for the eyes. Unfortunately, there is no award for best graphic book design, otherwise she would definitel deserve it.

toin Duijx
Associate Professor of Children's Literature, Tilburg University



l ear NiNg How to Feel : CHil Dre N's l itera ture a ND t He Histor y o F emotio Nal so Cializa tio N*, *1870–1970. Ed. by Ute Frevert et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 308 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-968499-1.

The "affective turn" in the humanities has produced a burgeoning scholarship on the role of emotion in social life from a variety of philosophical, theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. Among researchers of children's literature, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, Maria Nikolajeva, and John Stephens have introduced Cognitive Poetics and Theory of Mind to the analysis of emotion and empathy in children's texts. The affective turn has also stimulated renewed interest in, and a proliferation of research centres for, the history of emotion across the globe. *Learning How to Feel: Children's Literature and Emotional Socialization, 1870–1970* is the work of researchers affiliate with one such institution, the Center for the History of Emotions, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin. The majority of the contributors are historians. Their disciplinary location informs their approach to children's fiction mostly from Western Europe, Britain and the United States. It also shapes the contributor's understanding of how literary texts mediate in the emotional socialization of children and adolescents.

Readers looking for extended analyses informed by contemporary theories of emotion will not fin it in this volume. As the introductory essay indicates, the volume principally understands the pedagogic capacity of children's fictio in terms of mimesis. Discussed in depth in the epilogue, this theory of mimesis derives from Anthropology. Few of the twelve essays engage with literary theory or narratology, and a number overlook relevant children's literature scholarship. Instead, the volume uses children's narratives to exemplify broader social trends in the history of emotion rather than as objects of close critical analysis. The value of *Learning How to Feel* lays elsewhere in the rich historical research on emotion that contextualizes the discussion of the fiction including: advice manuals; political and scholarly tracts articulating the influenc of religious, educational, and political reforms; developments in child psychology and child-rearing practices; and changing attitudes to gender, race and class.

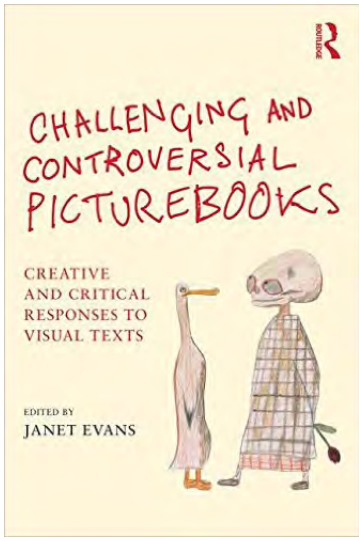
Each essay focuses on a "feeling", a term that encompasses primary affects like fear and pain, social emotions like shame and love, as well as epistemologically ambiguous "emotions" like trust, homesickness, and piety. Virtue is sometimes a close relation of emotional didacticism in the fictio in question. The conceptual design of the collection is elegant, even if not all the contributors adhere to the book's organising principles. The chapter titles typically link an emotion with a fictiona character. A synopsis of an episode from the novel in which the character appears introduces the chapter and frames the discussion of a large number of

novels. There are exceptions to this rule. Chapter one, "Mrs Gaskell's Anxiety", begins with the author's personal baby diary and concentrates on advice literature for parents. If Gaskell precedes the period of the study, chapter six, "Wendy's Love (*Peter Pan*)", extends its discussion into the twenty-firs century when it describes new family formations.

If mention of Mrs Gaskell and JM Barrie suggests a focus on British or Anglophone literature, this is not the case. One of the main strengths of this book is its extensive coverage of children's literature from a wide range of countries. German children's literature is strongly represented, unsurprising given the book's provenance. However, American, British, Dutch, French, Italian, Norwegian, Russian, Swedish, and Swiss texts are also discussed. On the one hand, *Learning How to Feel* is exemplary in its conduct of comparative analysis across the axes of time and space. It observes changing trends in understandings of childhood, emotion and its literary representation between 1870 and 1970, and the influenc of cultural sensibility, for instance, British emotional restraint, and the political imperatives of empire and nation, including revolution in Russian and National Socialism in Germany.

On the other hand, with the exception of Pernau's contribution – the chapter on children's literature in India and an extended discussion of transnationalism in the epilogue – the book does not engage with children's fictio *from* the "former colonies". Brückenhaus looks at compassion in relation to Eurocentrism in Robinsonades, but thereby focuses on the centre, not the periphery. This oversight is all the more apparent in a book otherwise distinguished by its transnational perspective and comparative approach. *Learning How to Feel* nevertheless acquaints Anglophone readers with an extensive range of Western European children's literature and provides a wealth of fascinating historical detail for all readers.

elizabeth bullen
Deakin University



CHalle Ngi Ng a ND Co Ntroversial pi Cturebooks: Crea tive a ND Criti Cal respo Nses to visual text
ed. by j anet evans.
London and New York: Routledge, 2015. 291 pages.
ISBN: 978-1-138-79774-1

Picturebooks are often assumed to be for the very young; however, this edited volume by Janet Evans shows that picturebooks and other visual texts with challenging and controversial topics and illustrations provide rich opportunities for responses by readers of all ages, including young children, who are able to derive rich meanings from such complicated texts. These "unconventional, non-conformist" books push all readers to question deep philosophical and psychological issues and are reflection of our post-modern and increasingly diverse world.

The articles in this edited volume examine book format, subject matter, and reader, and they raise many questions about challenging and controversial visual texts, among them: Who are such books for? What kinds of philosophical life issues are raised? How do these books challenge notions of childhood or what is suitable for children? What is the place of picturebooks in contemporary society? How can controversial topics be understood in an aesthetic way? What are the sophisticated and complex ways in which children respond to them? Are the boundaries between children's and adult literature being erased? The various contributors, who represent internationally respected picturebook scholars, wrestle with these questions, among others. In addition, the reader is introduced to picturebooks that have not received wide exposure in the English-speaking world, such contemporary Scandinavian picturebooks, Italian fairy tales, and French wordless picturebooks.

The book is organized into four parts: challenging and controversial picture books—what are they and who are they for; controversy and ambiguity in the art of the visual; creative, critical, and philosophical responses to challenging picturebooks; and thoughts from a children's book publisher. Evans's interview with Klaus Flugge, Managing Director of Andersen Press, a press that has often published unconventional books, examines why publishers would be willing to take risks with books that "challenge, provoke, [and] arouse admiration, respect, surprise and controversy."

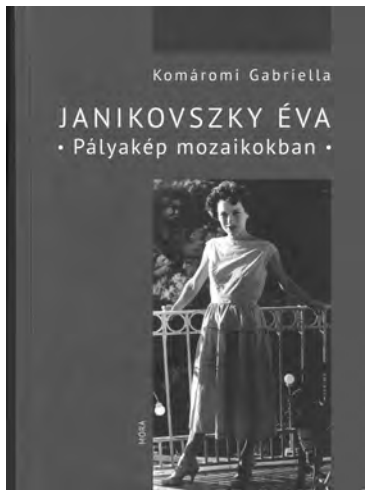
What constitutes a challenging and/or controversial visual text? The definitio covers a wide range of topics and visual formats. The contributors to this volume write about death, war, drugs, abortion, and immigration as well as picturebooks, comics, graphic novels, and "fusion texts". Particularly powerful are the studies that report children's interactions with picturebooks and how these books provoke a great deal of thoughtful discussion on controversial or philosophical issues. In a classroom study, Evans found that children are easily able to deal with challenging subject matter, perhaps more than adults would give them credit for. As one girl stated: "A challenging picturebook is a book that invites discussion and scrutiny so you can understand it." Children seem less daunted by challenging or controversial subject matter than adults, who filte , censor, and select books for the young. In the empirical work in classrooms, various authors found that using challenging and controversial books with young readers has many benefits They encourage children to develop their in-

terpretive responses, to challenge stereotypes, to change their own visual preferences and aesthetic understandings of complex texts, to develop the uses of symbolic visual language, and to learn about complex emotions and confront fears.

Arizpe notes that the "power of the image…and the impact of the word" work together to deepen the impact of controversial, even unsettling subjects. She adds that there are "picturebooks whose controversial subject matter and unconventional, often unsettling style of illustration challenge the reader, pushing them to question and probe deeper to understand what the book is about." As multiple contributors to this volume show, children responding to visual texts with challenging and controversial subject matter are able not only to understand such matters, but they provide fresh and sophisticated ways of thinking about and viewing them.

The book highlights in myriad ways the importance of controversial and challenging visual texts. They push the boundaries of "acceptable" subject matter and visual formats and move the publishing industry forward in reflectin contemporary society. These books offer a mirror for a greater diversity of people to see themselves and their concerns reflecte in books, and they promote greater tolerance and acceptance among their readers. In all, this edited volume can be helpful in examining our own thoughts and stretching our own opinions to include perspectives that may be different from our own.

Donna sayers a domat
Indiana University USA



Ja Nikovszky Év a. pál yak Ép mozaikokba N (mosai C o F a Career). **g abriella k omáromi.**
Budapest: Móra Könyvk, 2014.
334 pages.
ISBN: 978-963-11-9689-4.

Following the death of Éva Janikovszky in 2003, it took a decade until her literary estate was evaluated and a biography written about her. This credit is due to Gabriella Komáromi, who is known in Hungary and beyond as scholar and critic of children's literature. Following seminal literary histories, several contributions to literary studies, and many book reviews, she firs published a biography of the Hungarian storyteller of fairytales Lazar Erwin, followed by the present volume on the life and work of Éva Janikovszky.

Éva Janikovszky enjoys international recognition as children's book author; her books have been translated into more than 36 languages. She lived during times that continue to cause controversy. The years of Communist dictatorship under Matyas Rákosi, a student of Stalin, and of the government of Janos Kádar, which witnessed the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, are still awaiting their critical historical assessment.

One has to see Éva Janikovszky within the conflictin context of this period. Born into the upper middle class, she was a steadfast socialist all her life; her political convictions and inner struggles left their marks in her texts. Her works are documents of contemporary history, and even her picture books can be interpreted as an expression of her open-minded, tolerant views.

Komáromi abandons the strict chronology of biographical narratives in favor of a character portrait, pieced together by many mosaic fragments, of the exceptional author Janikovszky, who never had the intention of becoming a writer.

Gabriella Komáromi reconstructs Janikovszky's childhood and adolescence from her diaries, traces her path to becoming a writer, and follows her changeful career marked by long writing intermissions. This firs part of the book portrays Hungarian society before World War II as perceived by an adolescent, while also describing how and why Éva Janikovszky began to write and documenting the success of her firs picture books.

The subsequent chapters approach her work from a more theoretical perspective. Readers learn about Éva Janikovszky's intended audience, how she conceived her heroes and conceptualized her picture books, and the relevance of the historical context. A whole chapter is dedicated to Janikovszky's "God-given" humor. Humor is a hallmark of her picture books, often paired with irony, extending the communicative possibilities of her texts.

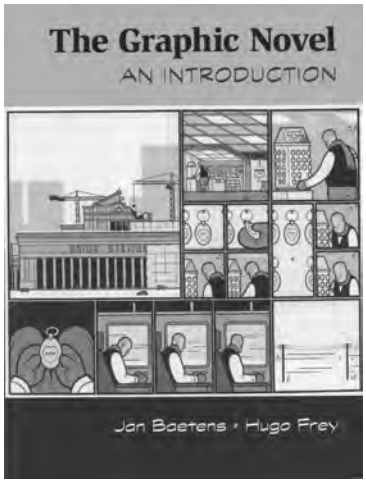
The picture books of Éva Janikovszky would not be the same without the illustrations by Laszlo Reber, who deserves his own chapter. The words and images belong together and join forces in telling the story – Laszlo Reber can thus be considered as co-author of the picture books. Trusting in the simplicity of cartoonish line drawings, he succeeds in rendering even the most difficul situations and events in his illustrations. Critics called the two the "well-rehearsed team from Hungary".

The following chapters of the biography shed light on the diversity of Éva Janikovszky's writings. Apart from picture books, she published fairytales and several novels for children, including the novel "Raspberry Syrup and Straw", which appeared at the height of her career and was adapted for film

In the 1980s, Éva Janikovszky fell increasingly silent, and in the 1990s, she began writing books for adults: newspaper features and novellas, stories on the topic of ageing, subjective musings, which always incorporated autobiographical elements.

With this biography, Gabriella Komáromi has produced a well-researched, extensive portrait of an exceptional author. Readers it will gain a richer understanding of aspects of Hungarian children's literature, the history of this literature and of its producers living in Hungary during the middle of this past century.

Dorothea a mberg
International Youth Library



tHe grap HiC Novel: aN iNtro DuCtio N. Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 286 pages. ISBN: 978-1-107-65576-8.

In a ground-breaking and ambitious critical examination of the graphic novel, Baetens and Frey detail the emergence and evolution of this unique medium of storytelling. While the book is divided into three sections addressing 1) the historical context of the graphic novel; 2) its forms; and; 3) its themes, a central and underlying commitment overall is definin and defending the graphic novel as a distinct medium and genre at the intersections of the comics tradition and the literary novel.

Tracing the rise of adult and underground comics during and after an era of moral panic and mass censorship and the subsequent spirit of artistic rebellion post 1950, the authors argue that the lengthier, more refle - ive work that became what we now consider the graphic novel, arose out of these contributions with a sense of self-knowing and a playfulness with the purposes of the comic form. They show how the graphic novel today embodies an expansion of comics beyond commercial serialized action and adventure stories aimed at entertaining, toward more diverse and complex forms of graphic narratives.

Despite the comprehensive title, it is important to point out that the volume is concerned with the graphic novel for adults and does not address the medium as children's literature or as literature for young adults. In framing the graphic novel as an adult genre, the authors' distinctions between adult and juvenile audiences may raise questions for some readers. Of course, literature for children and youth has undergone its own shape-shifting in the past half a century with the qualities of subversion, experimentation, and serious topics redefinin the literary landscape amidst which graphic novels for youth are a part (*Coraline, Persepolis, American Born Chinese, and Jane, the Fox, and Me* being just a few examples). Another volume will be needed, which conceptualizes this evolution. Readers with an interest in literature for children, to make use of this book, will need to take up the ideas offered here as analytical lenses for examining graphic novels for children and youth.

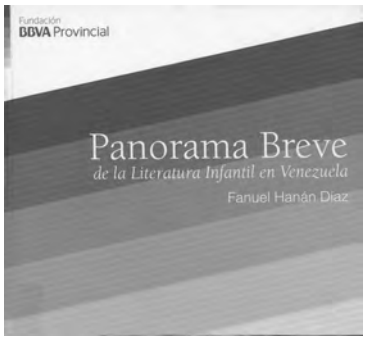
In the spirit of the pioneering work of McCloud (*Understanding Comics,* 1993) and Eisner (*Comics and Sequential Art,* 1985) several decades ago, the middle section of the book provides a conceptual framing and lexicon that will be especially useful to readers interested in the graphic novel from the standpoint of children's literature. In this section, the authors present a range of theoretical perspectives (including Peeters, Groensteen, Fresnault-Deruelle, and Hatfield on panel structure, page layouts, drawing, style and word/image relations, all widely overlooked, under-theorized, and under-addressed aspects of multimodal storytelling. Sequential and non-sequential reading, graphiation, grammatextuality and word/image hybridity are among the concepts illuminated here through rich example and analysis. From the perspective that the medium imposes a set of possibilities as well as impossibilities and that "a story in graphic novel format is more than just a story told in the graphic novel format" (162), this section promises to inform teaching, stimulate conversation and advance scholarship in the particularities of how words, imagery, and design work in unique ways to convey meaning in the graphic novel.

Elsewhere, analysis at the intersection between the graphic novel and the literary novel shows how contemporary graphic novelists "use and rethink" the literary world (196), both identifying as literature and also creatively adapting its form and content. While the examples of crossover between the graphic novel and literary novel leave much to consider and examine in the way of exchanges, interplays, and fusions, these central ideas are at times weighted down by sustained hierarchical comparisons to the literary novel. Given a context that has historically privileged print text over graphic narratives, this stance toward legitimacy may be seen as at odds with the democratizing, crossover and hybrid cultural spaces that the medium grew out of and from which it gains its own unique complexity.

In the end, the authors raise the book's most provocative questions about the work that gets done in the space of contemporary graphic novels. Citing illustrative examples (Spiegelman, Baker, Sacco, and Bacderf) they invite consideration of alternative, critical ways of engaging history versus contemporary trends toward nostalgia for the comic form. As part of a comprehensive introduction to the graphic novel, I was left wanting to hear sustained analysis beyond the realm of the treatment of history into a range of critical social perspectives, considerations that might address a wider critical potential of the form. As a more compelling way of conceptualizing the evolution of the genre than claims about market driven desires for more visual material

(192), the closing argument about the power of "aesthetics to provoke thought" (245) deserves more attention and may well be the beginning place more than a conclusion.

Jessica whitelaw
Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania where she studies arts-based literacies and teaches courses in literature and literacies for children and youth and in teacher leadership.



pa Norama breve De la l iter - a tura iNFa Ntil e N v eNezuela (a brief overview of children's literature in venezuela).
Fanuel h anán d íaz.
Caracas: Fundación BBVA Provincial, 2013. 166 pages.
ISBN: 978-980-6507-37-1.

Most publications on children's literature of the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America focus on the recent part, notably on the past thirty years during which literature for children and young adults has become a flourishin field Contributions to the history of the firs part of the 20th century, during which children's literature came into its own, remain rare. And the period from the Spanish reign to the declaration of independence of the colonies, which went on to become sovereign states with their own distinct political, economic, and cultural agendas, has hardly received scholarly attention at all.

Hence there is great merit in Fanuel Hanán Díaz's choice to open his „Panorama Breve de la Literatura Infantil en Venezuela" with the early beginnings of his country's children's literature and to trace its developments all the way to the present day. Giving a comprehensive survey on 165 pages is impossible, of course, but the slim volume succeeds in presenting an informative panorama of the fiel useful both to experts and novices looking for a firs overview.

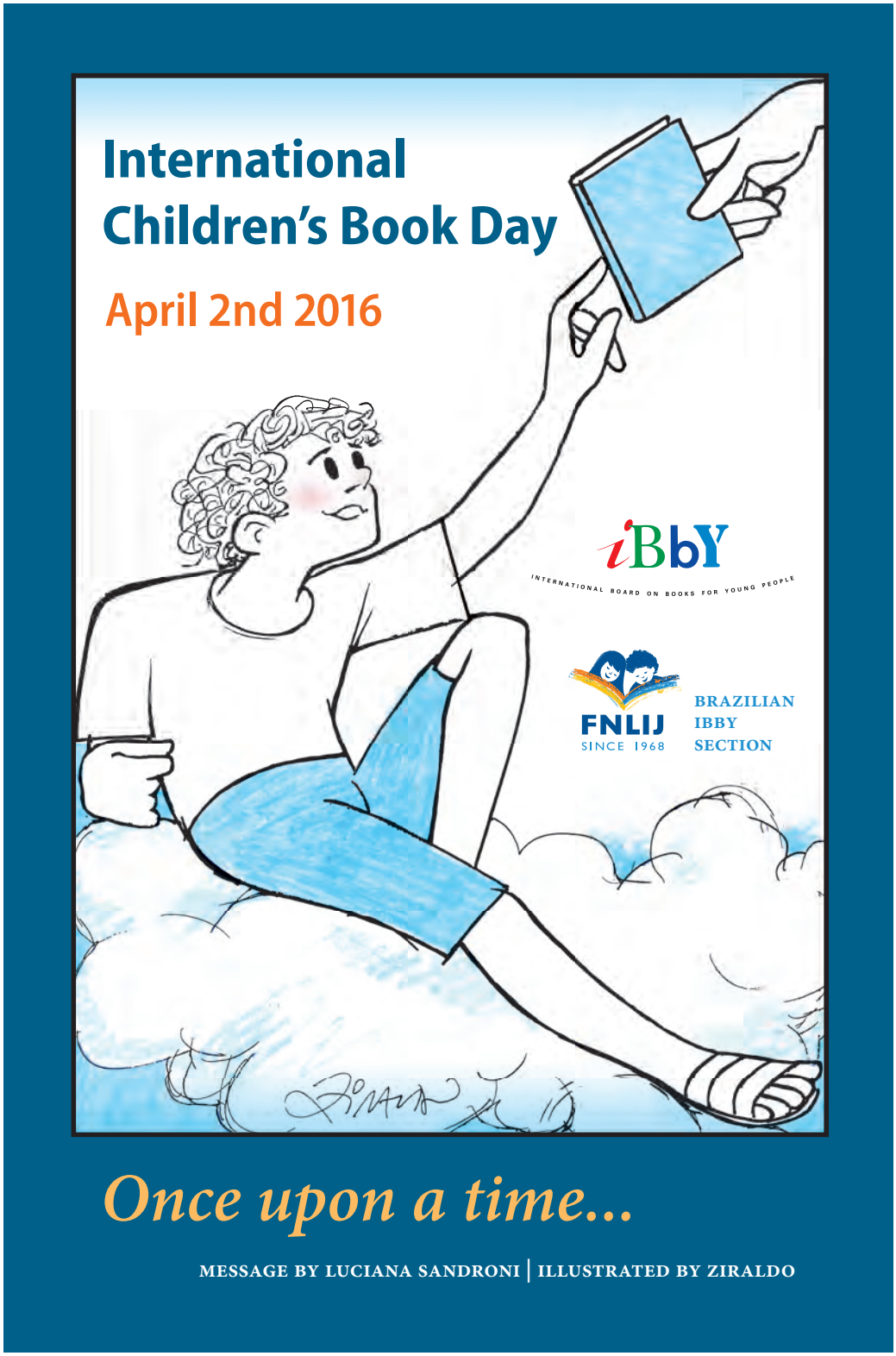
The historical survey is organized chronologically, falling into two parts, which are distinctly different in structure and perspective, and thus resulting in a somewhat heterogeneous whole. In the part devoted to contemporary children's literature (1980s onwards), Díaz follows the lead of other authors before him in focusing on the key genres of Venezuelan children's literature, such as poetry, songs and rhymes or fairy-tales, legends, and myths, which rely on and keep reinventing the rich oral storytelling tradition. He also gives portraits of important authors and illustrators, presents individual works as milestones of his country's children's literature, sheds light on the development of the publishing industry, and takes a closer look at picture-books and informational books, two types he has been working on more extensively over the last few years.

The firs part of the overview, leading up to 1980, follows a more traditional literary historical approach. Overall, it reads more rigorous and convincing than the second part. Díaz draws on literary sociology and history of education to situate reading within its specifi historical, political, socio-economic, and cultural context. This stronger focus on extraliterary conditions is also due to the fact that children's literature only emerged as an independent fiel around the beginning of the 20th century. So Díaz looks at the various kinds of reading materials for young readers, for example, or at who possessed literacy skills and had access to print within the feudal social structures. He explains how books served (religious) instruction, or what it meant that there were no print shops or publishers in present-day Venezuela until 1808, so that all print products had to be imported chiefl from Spain.

Given the paucity of historical sources, especially for the time of the Spanish rule, the chronicle necessarily lacks in definitio and shows some gaps. Díaz tries to compensate by fillin in the blanks by drawing on overall developments in literature or other domains, and succeeds in putting together a convincing account full of useful facts and insights.

For a prospective new edition of this lavishly illustrated work, it would be desirable to add captions to all images, and to replace those images, which are not directly related to the text on the page. Furthermore, an index seems indispensable. Overall, however, „Panorama Breve de la Literatura Infantil en Venezuela" is a highly recommendable read.

Jochen w eber
International Youth Library


International
Children's Book Day
April 2nd 2016
iBbY
INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
FNLIJ
SINCE 1968
BRAZILIAN
IBBY
SECTION
Once upon a time...
MESSAGE BY LUCIANA SANDRONI | ILLUSTRATED BY ZIRALDO

By Liz Page

liz page is Executive director of the international board on books for young People (ibby)

International Children's Book Day 2016: Once Upon a Time...

EVERY YEAR on or around 2 April, activities to celebrate International Children's Book Day take place around the world as we remember Hans Christian Andersen and his wonderful world of stories. Since 1967, every year an IBBY National Section sponsors the special poster and message to the children of the world. In 2016, the materials are from the IBBY section in Brazil (FNLIJ). Author Luciana Sandroni wrote a story to accompany the poster in which she starts with the time-honored opening to any story: Once upon a time... Ziraldo—a favorite illustrator, designer, and cartoonist—did the artwork.

The 2016 ICBD materials can be ordered from the Brazilian IBBY section or downloaded from the IBBY website.

Bookbirds of Passage: From Iran to Denmark

IN A SMALL LIBRARY in Hjorring in the northern tip of Denmark, 140 Iranian illustrations from children's books delighted visitors. Since January 2015, the exhibition *New Pictures from Iran* has traveled throughout Denmark. It was the biggest exhibition of Iranian children's book illustrations shown outside Iran, and we have proudly presented it in libraries, culture houses, and museums in every part of our small country.

This IBBY project has been driven by passion and a Suzuki wagon. Steffen Larsen, reviewer of children's literature and known to every librarian in the country, drove his small van filled with the pictures from place to place. In every library or gallery, it was met with great excitement and pride—simply because it is a treasure trove of pictures. Forty Iranian artists, many of them internationally honored for their work, exhibited their talent in these illustrated children's

Postcard art by Nāzli Tahvili.From the exhibition New Pictures from Iran

books. The Persian cultural heritage is their playground, and they experiment wildly! The delicate lines known from Persian miniatures amaze the readers, and strange creatures of Persian mythology pop up in a modern context: they will embroider a picture, revive the linocut, dress figures in patchwork or silk paper—all with remarkable craft and artistic power. People leave the exhibition with a smile on their face, surprised by what they just saw. We know so little about Iran in our part of the world, and what little we know comes from media, leaving us with a picture of a religious society bound by tradition. These artists toss tradition up in the air and catch it again with unerring taste and modern angles. They shatter our picture of Iran and its inhabitants. They meet us in illustrations inspired by modern western culture, and yet they seduce us with that ancient Persian tone of perfect beauty. All to be seen in whatever central or remote library in Denmark where New Pictures from Iran grace the empty spaces between books or hang in an old bulb factory or in a hammam transformed into an art museum.

The exhibition is a follow-up to the first tour *Pictures from Iran,* made in cooperation with a private publishing house in 2006–7. The Muhammed cartoon crisis was rolling through our nation at the same time as our first Iranian exhibition rolled rather more quietly between Danish cities and the countryside. There is no need to say which event received the most attention. Nevertheless, it was then we first saw the surprised smiles that have kept us going ever since. Financial support from the Danish state allowed us to invite two Iranian artists to Denmark for a week, and we were taught to soar in the sky! Iranians belong to the element of air—just look at the pictures.

Later, in 2013, another Iranian exhibition, *Anaarestan* (country of pomegranate), was exhibited in Copenhagen, curated by Bibiana Denmark. *Anaarestan* is a traveling exhibition from the

International Youth Library in Munich, and again, Persian miniatures are predominant in the collection of illustrations.

Both of these earlier exhibitions were smaller and more exclusive than our present exhibition. When the urge for another Iranian exhibition in Denmark arose, we decided to do it in cooperation with the illustrators themselves. Ali Boozari has been our co-partner for this present exhibition, *New Pictures from Iran*. He is the director of Iranian Illustrators Society and a member of the Iranian section of IBBY. The exhibition illustrations show us the impressive range and diversity of styles and techniques found among young Iranian artists today. The forty artists are young, and twenty-seven of them are women. Ali and the illustrators designed the catalogue with support from the Danish Society of Illustrators. The Society also lent the frames, allowing the venues to have a ready-made exhibition. A set of postcards of the artwork was developed to accompany the exhibition.

Swedish IBBY will present the exhibition in various Swedish libraries in the fall of 2016. We hope to keep *New Pictures from Iran* on the road until spring 2017 and then let it travel to Bratislava to be exhibited at BIB'17.

Finally, it is highly recommendable to throw yourself into a huge project like this, happily ignorant of the work involved. You will win friendships that cross the borders, meet another world, and see puzzled smiles of recognition triggered by the strange beauty of pictures from Iran.

Lis Andersen
Vice President of IBBY Denmark

On the Border...

IN JUNE 2015, members of the IBBY Foundation, USBBY, and REFORMA visited the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas on a two-day fact-finding trip to better understand the circumstances surrounding the arrival of over 180,000 Central American children seeking refugee status in the United States over the past eighteen months and the conditions of their reception, as well as to meet with child advocates and service providers for refugee and unaccompanied minors. The aim was to explore ways to improve the lives of the children through books and library services.

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador as well as parts of Mexico are once again experiencing renewed conflict with the death rate climbing to levels seen in the 1980s. This conflict is primarily driven by the drug trade and the war on drugs. In Central America, the repercussions of the previous war—in particular, the corruption, extreme inequality, poor policing, and broken social structures—have resulted in governments finding themselves virtually incapable of protecting their citizens. As in most war zones, children suffer the most grievous consequences. The flood of unaccompanied children seeking refuge from the violence is a direct result of the past forty-five years of war in the region. It is widely understood that these children have legitimate claims as refugees as their lives in their home countries are endangered by gangs, hostile police forces, and the chaos brought about by the war on drugs. Not only are there over 4,000 children a month continuing to arrive at the US border but also many thousands being held in Mexico.

Children who are readers have better life-long outcomes. Strong public libraries, access to appropriate materials, and a strong culture of reading promotion in communities help children everywhere live better lives. Poor children and those from ethnic minorities often lack access to this support, even in countries as wealthy and stable as the United States. Refugee children and those whose societies are destroyed by conflict and post-conflict situations have almost no chance to thrive and grow. This is not only deeply unjust, it is also unacceptable. We can change this situation. We call for everyone to join us to give these children who are suffering the chance they deserve to live good, positive lives. Our experience tells us that reading aloud, talking about feelings using books, and seeking the emotional support that comes from reading is a very powerful way to help children who are afraid and suffering trauma.

As part of a welcome pack for the children as they arrive, IBBY Foundation and REFORMA have designed and printed a card introducing the children to the library. The message is simple: go to the library and explore the many ways the library and the librarians can help you in your new life.

Al niño viajero
A la niña viajera
Al padre viajero o la madre viajera

La Biblioteca Pública es un lugar donde tú puedes encontrar muchas cosas que te serán muy útiles y agradables en tu nueva vida. ¡Y es gratis!

- Libros
- Computadoras
- CDS y DVDs
- Información acerca de tus derechos
- Información acerca de los servicios que hay en tu nueva comunidad
- Clubes de lectura
- Ayuda para los deberes
- Bibliotecarias y bibliotecarios que te puedan ayudar a ubicarte.

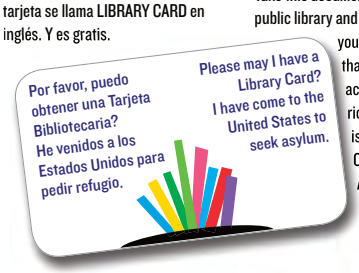
Lleva este documento a la biblioteca más cercana y pídeles que te den una tarjeta bibliotecaria que te permitirá acceder a todas estas riquezas. Esta tarjeta se llama **LIBRARY CARD** en inglés. Y es gratis.

To the travelling child
To the travelling parent

The Public Library is a place where you can find many things that will be very useful and fun in your new life. And it is free!

- Books
- Computers
- CDS and DVDs
- Information about your rights
- Information about the services that are available in your community
- Reading clubs
- Help with homework
- Librarians who can help you find things.

Take this document to the nearest public library and ask them to give you a **LIBRARY CARD** that will let you have access to all these riches. This card is called **LIBRARY CARD** in English. And it is free.



2015 Was a Year of IBBY Regional Meetings

LAST YEAR WAS A WONDERFUL YEAR for regional meetings: in Asia, in North America, in Africa, in Latin America, and in Europe.

The season started in Lima, Peru with the *4th Regional Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean sections of IBBY,* 23-24 February. One of the main topics was Children's Rights. During the 3rd Regional Meeting that was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2013, a decision was taken to draft a manifesto on Children's Rights and the importance of reading and literature. The manifesto would be then used to influence the public policies of member countries. The goal is to have solid and convincing grounds that demonstrate why IBBY's work is most relevant. Since all of the NS undertake projects that aim to promote access to books and reading, this work—which will include children, their rights, and reading—could represent an opportunity of having a unified presentation. It will show that IBBY is a worldwide organization comparable with the big international organizations, such as UNICEF and UNESCO among others.

Each section selected one of the existing rights for further development. The sections of Brazil and Mexico were appointed to be in charge of receiving the documents from their colleagues, unifying them, and drafting the manifesto. To unify and broaden the vision of each right, it was decided to focus on four categories:

The right to develop
The right to survival
The right to protection
The right to participation

From IBBY Mexico's perspective, each category can be analyzed according to the following questions:

What relation does this category have with the accessibility to written culture?
What relation does this category have with the accessibility and distribution of literature? (including informative books within literature)
What is the State doing about this category?
What does the State still need to do?
What does the civil society still need to do?

The meeting was well attended with participants from the IBBY sections of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. The sections also agreed on launching the *Latin American and Caribbean Regional Newsletter.*

The next was the annual meeting of the *European IBBY Sections* held in connection with the Bologna Book Fair in March 2015. The main news from this meeting was the decision to explore the possibility of holding a conference in Europe in 2017. The IBBY European Newsletter is well received, and the European website has been updated (http://www.ibby-europe.org).

In May, IBBY Malaysia organized the *2nd Asian and Oceania Regional Meeting* in Putrajaya, not far from Kuala Lumpur, 12-15 May. The theme of the conference was "One World, Many Stories: Exploring Diversities in Children's Literature and Literary Activities." International guests took part from the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and China. More than fifty papers were presented by participants—including keynote papers by Ahmad Redza Khairuddin current Malaysia IBBY President, who spoke about "Celebrating Diversities in Children's Literature and Literary Activities"; and Junko Yokota, past president of USBBY, whose topic was "Expanding the Ways We Tell Stories in Print and Digital Formats." IBBY President Wally De Doncker opened the congress saying "IBBY gets many ideas and initiatives from the Asian and Oceania region," and then he closed by saying that

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

IBBY Thailand will host the *3rd Asian and Oceania Regional Meeting* in Bangkok in 2017.

The 3rd IBBY African Congress was held in Kigali, Rwanda, 24-25 September. The conference, under the title "Reading promotion and reading culture in Africa today and tomorrow," attracted seventy participants from ten countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Switzerland, Uganda, the United States, and Zimbabwe. The many interesting speeches and presentations were given in English, French, and Kinyarwanda. The 2014 IBBY Honour List books and a selection of illustrations from BIB were on display throughout the conference. The conference also celebrated the twentieth anniversary of Bakame Editions, and the participants and other guests enjoyed a special gala evening with music and food. Each of the IBBY sections present gave reports of their activities. The final recommendations included ideas for increased cooperation, both nationally and across borders in order to achieve the goals of all IBBY sections. IBBY Uganda was selected to host the 4th African Regional Congress in 2017.

To celebrate the 150 anniversary of the publication of *Alice in Wonderland*, USBBY hosted the *11th IBBY Regional Conference* in New York City, 16-18 October, under the title "Through the Looking Glass: Exploring the Wonderland of International Children's Literature." And, indeed, international literature was the major theme throughout the conference. The highlights included panel discussions about translation, graphic novels, and illustration. Three Hans Christian Andersen award winners were present: Roger Mello (Brazil, 2014), David Almond (UK, 2010), and Lisbeth Zwerger (Austria, 1990). Patsy Aldana, Chair of the IBBY Foundation, and Oralia Garza de Cortes, Co-Chair, of the REFORMA Children in Crisis Committee, gave a joint presentation of the IBBY/REFORMA project to provide books for Children in Crisis on the Border (this presentation is available on the IBBY website). Susan Copper gave the traditional Dorothy Briley lecture. The 12th IBBY Regional Conference is scheduled to take place in Seattle in 2017.

The *Congreso Internacional Lectura 2015: para leer el XXI*, took place in Havana, Cuba, 27-31 October. Once again, Emilia Gallego organized a wonderful Latin American Congress with her colleagues from IBBY Cuba and other sections in the region. The congress took as its subtitle a statement from José Martí: "We must get to know the forces of the world in order to harness them." The aim of this congress was to look back at some of the complex circumstances that characterize life on our planet today, with all of its dizzying changes brought about by devastating violence. The central theme was the role of reading in human development and the urgency with which we have to create, develop, and consolidate, as the case may be, the conditions to guarantee a revealing, deep, and critical reading capable of allowing us to interpret the open and concealed codes that the text of the new realities demand. This kind of reading can only be done by an individual who thinks for him/herself; an honorable citizen; a human being who, in full possession of his humanity, takes on reading as a reflexive and emotional act; an individual who will be able to assume José Martí's faith in human improvement. Among the speakers were HCA Award winner Katherine Paterson (USA, 1998), Nora Lía Sormani from Argentina, Patsy Aldana from Canada, Dolores Prada from Brazil, Nilma Lacerda from Brazil, Johanna Lobo from Colombia, Alicia Molina from Mexico, Sandra Comino from Argentina, and Yuri Leopoldo de la Rosa from Mexico.

Surekha Panandiker: December 1936–October 2015 My Friend Surekha

SUREKHA WAS EVERYONE'S FRIEND who kept enlarging the family of her friend's circle with affection and assurance. Loving and caring came naturally to her as she did not believe in machinating faith. Even the slightest hint of hardship brought tears to her eyes just as she bore her pain with a smile. She charmed the Tsunami victims through her rapturous storytelling, reassurance, and suggestion of hope that the silent, dark-eyed little girl in the camp held her sari corner and asked her, "Can I call you Mother!" Dedication and vigor in each endeavor qualified her disposition.

From her youth, causes of social significance drew her into spirited action. She took up writing for children with the same outlook, promotion of reading, and reaching books to the underprivileged in remote areas became a mission of life. She managed the Children's Libraries for the IndianBBY with the thrill of a new reader at the sight of a colorful book and showed deep concern to details of extending the reading habit. It gave meaning to her existence, a satisfaction of achieving her life's dream.

Such was my friend, Surekha.

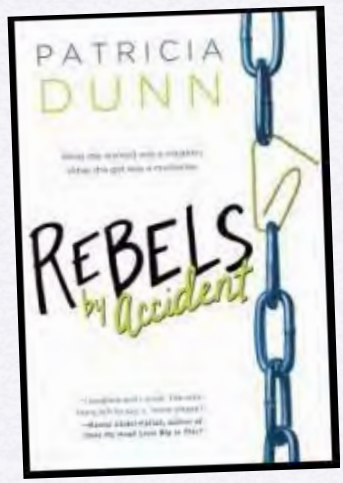
Ira Saxena
IBBY India

surekha panandiker performing at the indian bby conference on literacy through literature, February 2014

Rebels by Accident offers a bird's e e view of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The bird is a 15-year-old American-Egyptian who is initially embarrassed, frustrated and often angered by all things Egyptian, especially her Egyptian-born parents. Miriam's first act of rebellion is to follow her best friend Deanna to a forbidden party that included beer, police and jail. Miriam and Deanna's parents respond by sending both girls to Egypt for the rest of the school year, where they are under the watchful eye of Miriam's grandmother – the one Miriam's Baba says "rules with an iron fist." Although the book has a rather formulaic beginning – beer bashes, restrictive parents, insecure teens confronting questions of popularity and acceptance – teen readers may identify with Miriam and Deanna precisely because of these opening salvos. Children of immigrant parents may feel a particular affinity when Miriam announces, "I don't want t look like I'm Egyptian. I don't want to walk like one or talk like one or be one. I just want to be what I am. American." But as soon as the girls get off the plane in Cairo, the story picks up drama, surprise, Egyptian news and culture – and even starry-eyed teen love.

Karen Leggett Abouraya

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

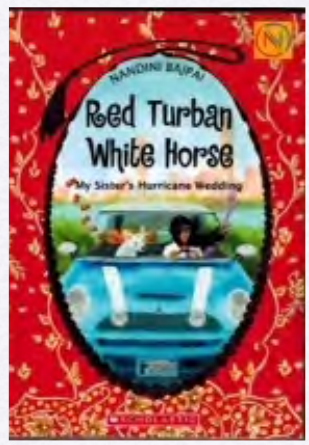


Rebels by Accident
Patricia Dunn
Naperville, Illinois:
Sourcebooks, 2014. 310 pp.
ISBN: 978 1 4926 0138 8
(Fiction; ages 12+)

Padmini ("Mini"), a 17-year-old Indian girl living in Boston, narrates this coming-of-age novel while singlehandedly planning her sister's wedding. The breezy prose style—with its Americanisms, descriptions of American teenagers' typical activities, and Anglicized pronunciation of Indian terms—immediately identifies Mini as being comfortable in her environment, yet she is conversant with her north Indian heritage as well. The chronological account of the wedding preparations is interspersed with varied narrative strategies to form a tightly knit plot: advertisements for Indian event planners, wedding horses, and caterers; lists of jobs; email exchanges with vendors; gossip column about a designer outfit; and eather reports on the progress of Hurricane Irene. Ironically, nothing works as planned. While Mini pragmatically faces the challenges posed by the hurricane, she simultaneously recognizes a serious fl w in her character—that she should not assume the worst about people close to her and should give them an opportunity to explain. Superficial y, *Red Turban White Horse* appears to be a formulaic novel about the exotica of Indian wedding celebrations; however, the subplots, vivid details, and cultural explanations lend intricacy and nuance to the main story.

Meena Khorana

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS



Red Turban White Horse: My Sister's Hurricane Wedding
Nandini Bajpai
Cover design by
Vikram Madan
Gurgaon, India: Scholastic India, 2013. 298 pp.
ISBN: 978-93-5103-003-4
(Fiction, ages12+)

Postcards

Our new postcard editor

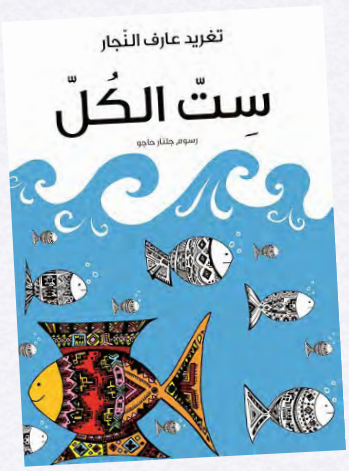
Barbara A. Lehman is Professor Emerita of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University. She has authored or edited five books on multicultural and global children's literature and child-centered literary criticism, most recently *Creating Books for the Young in the New South Africa: Essays on Authors and illustrators of Children's and Young Adult Literature,* published by McFarland in 2014. Her articles have appeared in *ChLA Quarterly, Children's Literature in Education,* and the *Journal of Children's Literature,* among others. She has co-edited *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* for the International Board on Books for Young People. She was president of USBBY in 2011 and the 2009 recipient of the Arbuthnot Award from the International Reading Association. She was a Fulbright Scholar in South Africa during 2004-2005 and now resides in Columbus, Ohio.

Against the Tide is about the transformation of a young girl in Gaza who courageously tackles the terrible situation that affects her amily by opting for a daring solution, "against the tide"! Yusra (age 15) becomes the only viable bread winner of her family in occupied and besieged Gaza, after her elder brother was tragically killed by an Israeli rocket and an accident that left her fishe man father in a wheelchair. Yusra decides to take over her father's fishing boat but needs to convince her family and to tolerate the criticism of a conservative society where women are striving for their rights. The task is thorny, but Yusra is determined and becomes the first fish woman in Gaza. Yusra makes a vital breakthrough by converting her father and his friends and a wide section of Gaza society who are inspired by her persistence and her bravery, facing, like other fishe men Israeli warships controlling the national coast of Gaza.

Inspired by a true event, this fictional account reflects the suffering and social l e in Gaza and dynamic change in the lives of youth yearning for liberation and social change. It was short-listed for the Etisalat Prize for Arabic Children's Literature.

Jehan Helou

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

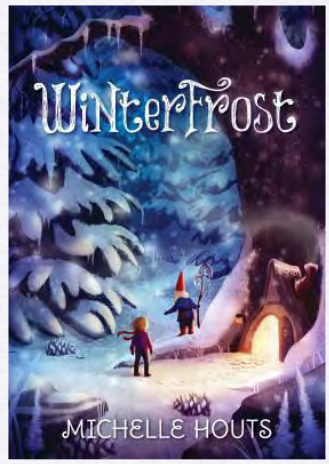


Sitt el Kol
(Against the Tide)
Taghreed Najjar
Illus. Gulnar Hajo
Amman, Jordan:
alSalwabooks. 2013. 155pp.
ISBN: 978-9957-04-071-0
(Fiction; ages 13-18)

Bettina Larsens was prepared for an unusual Christmas because her beloved grandfather, Farfar, was not there to celebrate the magic of the season. In fact, everything had lost its magic since Farfar died. So when Mor was suddenly called to help Bettina's grandmother and Far left to tend to an aging uncle, 12-year old Bettina remained in charge of the farm, animals, and her one-year-old sister, Pia. In the confusion of packing for departure, no one remembered to leave the customary bowl of rice pudding out for the small elf-like nisse, as Farfar had done for years. Many believed that nisse took care of Danish homes and animals. As you can imagine, the Larsens' mischievous nisse was not happy. The next day, a mysterious *winterfrost* had fallen over the island of Lolland, and Pia was missing after her nap! Now Bettina must venture into the world of the nisse to make amends and to find baby Pia! In this harming novel, readers of all ages journey into this tiny world, finding friendship, orgiveness, family, and magic along the way.

Bettie Parsons Barger

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

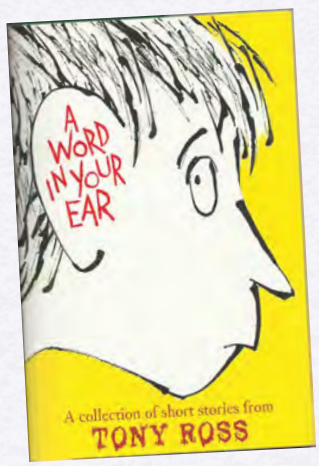


Winterfrost
Michelle Houts
Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2014. 272 pp.
ISBN: 978-0763665654
(Fiction; ages 7+)

A Word in Your Ear is a completely new venture for much loved British illustrator Tony Ross, and is an entertaining romp for both the young and not so young. Ross says he wanted to write about the "best parts" of his life and about his "darkest secrets" but realized that most of his best memories had only "nearly" happened to him! So every time he started to write, his imagination took over, and the result is 13 tantalizing, semi-true short stories, each with a unique twist, a brief note about what inspired him and, of course, accompanied by entertainingly witty pen and ink sketches. His fascinating tales cover a wide range of themes, from ghostly childhood imaginings to the Black Death, creating imaginary friends and the importance of keeping promises, mysteries at sea and stealing the Mona Lisa.... plus many more surprises. They are a narrative treat, told with a tongue-in-cheek humor worthy only of a great visual storyteller who has found a different oice!

Penni Cotton

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS



A Word in Your Ear
Tony Ross
Illus. Tony Ross
London: Andersen Press, 2014. 173 pp.
ISBN: 978-1-78344-050-4
(Short Stories; ages 9+)

Calls

Would you like to write for IBBY's journal?

CFP: Ch Ild REn' S lITERA Tu RE FRo M nEW ZEAl And, Au STRAl IA And oCEA n IA

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature invites contributions for a special issue exploring Children's Literature from New Zealand, Australia and Oceania. Topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Local literature and global genres – is there an Oceanic Children's Gothic? A Pasifika school story?
- Books and digital media in children's lives in New Zealand, Australia and Oceania
- Myths and legends and their adaptations
- Indigenous cultures and national literatures
- Children's literature in indigenous languages
- Children's literature by and about migrants and refugees in New Zealand, Australia and Oceania
- Children's literature as pastoral in an Oceanic context
- Settler legacies on children's literature in New Zealand and Australia
- New Zealand, Australian and Oceanic literature in the context of "The Global South."

Full papers should be submitted to the editor, Björn Sundmark (bjorn.sundmark@mah.se), and guest editor, Anna Jackson (anna.jackson@vuw.ac.nz) by 1 April. 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*.

CFP: "Ano Th ER Ch Ild REn' S lITERA Tu RE": WRITIng BY Ch Ild REn And You Th

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature invites contributions for a special issue on "another children's literature"—one created by children and youth themselves. Usually, "children's literature" has been assumed to be literature written by adults for children. In this issue, however, we intend to focus on literature created by children and youth. While there has been some critical attention to the juvenilia of canonical authors and considerable educational and psychological interest in what children's writing reveals about children, comparatively little attention has been paid to the literary dimensions of—and theoretical issues raised by—children's and youths' writing.

Full papers should be submitted to the editor, Björn Sundmark (bjorn.sundmark@mah.se), and guest editor, Peter E. Cumming (cummingp@yorku.ca) by 1 July 2016. 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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