

Bookbird



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IBBY

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A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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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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IBBY may be contacted at Nonnenweg 12 Postfach, CH-4009 Basel, Switzerland, tel: +4161 272 29 17
fax: +4161 272 27 57 email: ibby@ibby.org

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In my Children's Literature class—a course that I teach every semester—the assignment that I enjoy the most is one in which the students present an illustrator or author from their own home country, or one that is important in their mother tongue. Since the class usually consists of 25 students from some 12-15 countries (most of them are exchange students), this always means that there is always great variation. It also means that there is a true learning experience for everyone, me included. I have learnt so much from these presentations over the years! I think, too, that the students have enjoyed learning from each other as well, rather than just from the teacher. It is also clear to me that everyone rises to the occasion when given an opportunity to speak about a work or an author/illustrator that is important to them.

On a larger scale, the Bologna Book Fair has a similar function. It's a place where publishers, countries, languages, tell the world about the greatness and beauty of their writers, their artists, their books. This too is a learning experience. And, to draw out the parallel further, *Bookbird* endeavours something along these same lines. Here we invite critics and other children's book professionals to share their insights about children's books from all parts of the

world, from all languages and traditions. Never is this mission more apparent than when it comes to the two HCA Awards' issues: the Nominees' issue, with its 60+ short presentations, and the Winners' issue, where the winners and shortlisted authors and illustrators are presented with in-depth articles by experts from their own countries. This is a flagship feature of *Bookbird*. Other academic journals present critical articles on different children's literature topics; we do too, in three out of four annual publications. But only *Bookbird* makes room once a year for presentations in which experts from all around the world explain what is remarkable and important about their chosen children's writer or illustrator.

To read these presentations is a learning experience. Even if we consider ourselves experts on children's literature, what we know best (if we are honest) is usually limited to our own national literature (which can be large in itself, of course), and maybe a handful international classics. Other than that, most of us may know a bit about the main contemporary (English) children's bestsellers, and spinoffs of the culture industry (Disney, Pixar, Studio Ghibli, etc.). When we read the presentations in this issue, however, we will make

new acquaintances.

For instance, of the eleven authors and illustrators presented in this issue, most were new to me. I have read some of Joy Cowley's work. I know a little about Eiko Kadono because of the Miyazaki film, *Kiki's Delivery Service*. I have seen Iwona Chmielewska's book about Janusz Korczak. And being from Sweden, I of course know Ulf Stark's books very

well (and knew him personally).

But the others are new to me.

If you, like me, want to get to know these champions of children's literature better, the presentations here are ideal. They are also a resource to return to—maybe one of the few available in English—of some of these outstanding creators of children's books.



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*.

Eiko Kadono: Hans Christian Andersen Author Award Winner

Junko Sakoi and Yoo Kyung Sung



Born in Tokyo, Japan, on January 1, 1935, Eiko Kadono is one of the most respected and well-known authors of children's literature in Japan. Her books have been deeply influential for several generations of Japanese children. She has won numerous national and international awards—including the 1985 Noma Prize for Children's Literature, the 1985 Shogakukan Children's Publication Culture Award, the 1986 IBBY Honor List, the 2016 Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award, and finally the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award. *Majo no Takkyuubin* (Kiki's Delivery Service, 1985) is perhaps her most famous

book, having been adapted into an internationally acclaimed animated film by Studio Ghibli. Her work includes over two hundred picturebooks, novels, and translations. Many of her stories are contemporary and modern fantasy books. Her books tend to feature characters as witches, spirits, and shadow creatures, as well as socially neglected groups such as the elderly, children, and, women.

Many of the unique aspects of Kadono's work are drawn from her ordinary daily life, but they tell of a wide range of life experiences. In her autobiography, *Kadono Eiko no Mainichi Iroiro* (Eiko Kadono's Everyday Life), we learn most of her days are not

that different from readers' own. She spends her time cooking, gardening, traveling, reading, and writing. Her experiences as a traveler have also nurtured her stories. She has traveled widely, from local regions throughout Japan to global locations in Europe, Brazil, Australia, and the Middle East. The resulting cultural knowledge goes far beyond her native Japanese culture and is richly reflected through characters and various story settings in hybrid genres, like realism-based modern fantasy. In addition, Kadono's childhood memories have become material for many of her books. Born in 1935, Kadono lived through many hardships and privations during her childhood in wartime Japan. Other autobiographical elements in her books include the loss of her mother, her father's bedtime stories, her migration to Brazil, and finally, her becoming a children's author. In this essay, we trace Kadono's footsteps in both her real and literary worlds. We first discuss her contributions to children's literature that are not known to many of readers outside of Japan. Then we explore her life on a more personal level, examining major themes in her life and how they influenced her work. Finally, we discuss her special efforts to tell stories from marginalized voices that are often misunderstood, distorted, and even ignored in the real world.

Kadono's Contribution to Children's Literature *Kadono's Fantasy Series*

Perhaps the Harry Potter books are the most internationally known and popularized fantasy series starting from the late 1990s. Prior to Harry Potter though, there was Kadono's fantasy series in the early 1980s. Kadono's fantasy series, which she began writing in the early 1980s, is not widely known outside of Japan but has long been popular with children in her home country. The Little Ghost story series has been a best-seller, re-released frequently, and even adapted into an anime television show. Kadono's monster-like and roundish white-colored little ghosts are friendly and domesticated, living with humans and helping them. Sometimes they do tricks, such as vanishing and changing their appearance. In *Hamburgeru Tsukurouyo* (Let's Make a Hamburg Steak, 1979), a ghost and a cat cook a burger for a girl's birthday. In *Pizza Pie kun Tasuketeyo* (Pizza Pie, Help Me, 1981), a ghost creates new pizza recipes for a pizza restaurant and improves business. Across the series, the ghosts' cooking activities inspire young children with a

sense of joy as a maker in Japan. Young children also enjoy the series because of the high degree of inter-textual connections among its books.

Kadono as a Translator and Her Translated Books

Kadono's books are widely read internationally, and translations of many of her works are available in many languages; she has personally translated several of her books into English. *Odango Soup* and *Ak-achan ga Yattekita* are available in English under the titles *Grandpa's Soup* and *Dan's New Baby*. Several Little Ghost books, such as *Let's Make a Hamburg Steak* and *I Want to Eat Spaghetti*, are available in Indonesian as *Seri Little Ghost: Memasak Hamburger* and *Seri Little Ghost: Aku Ingin Makan Spageti*. Moreover, *Boku Byoki Jyanaiyo* (I Am Not Sick) is available in French (*Docteur Ours*), Dutch (*Marc is Ziek*), and Korean (난 병이 난 게 아니야). *Kiki's Delivery Service* is available in English, Italian, Swedish, Chinese, and Korean.

Kadono has also made over a hundred works of international children's literature available to children in Japan through her translation work—including Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales such as *The Little Mermaid*, *Thumbelina*, and *The Emperor's New Clothes*. She also translated renowned international classics from American, British, Irish, Dutch, and Swedish authors and illustrators. The British author and illustrator Mick Inkpen's Kipper story series, such as *Kipper's Toybox* and *Kipper's Birthday*, and Dick Bruna's Miffy stories have been especially popular, read through generations in Japan. Astrid Lindgren's Swedish classic *Pippi Longstocking*, the story of a playful girl with a strong sense of independence who lives without her parents, was translated into Japanese by Kadono and published in Japan.

Story Motifs from Personal Experiences

We found four major themes from Kadono's life that are reflected in her books: (1) seeking the roots of a deceased mother, (2) stories of family relationships, (3) childhood during World War II, and (4) migration to Brazil and world travel.

Seeking the Roots of a Deceased Mother

Kadono was only five when her mother died prematurely. In her autobiography, Kadono recalls that her childhood was full of sadness, loneliness, and anxiety because of the loss of her mother (Kadono 104). Her

childhood sorrows drew her to mull the concept of death from a young age. Kadono's childhood experiences are reflected in many of her stories, which tend to feature a character longing for a mother. For example, in *Last Run*, a contemporary fantasy novel; and *Tonneru no Mori 1945* (The Forest with a Tunnel 1945), a work of historical fiction, young female characters suffer from loneliness and emotional challenges after losing a beloved mother at a young age. Yet Kadono's way of filling the emptiness from a mother's absence make her stories charming, hopeful, and even encouraging. Characters' emotional journeys are dealt with in a sensitive and respectful manner in Kadono's books without presupposing that children are innocent or unaware of their surroundings.

The motif of a five-year old child losing her mother tends to recur across Kadono's books. The protagonist in *The Forest with a Tunnel 1945* loses her mother at age five and is raised by her grandmother, father, and stepmother during wartime Japan. *Last Run* features a seventy-four-year-old woman named Iko who lost her mother when she was five. She goes on a journey to discover her mother's roots. *Nada to iu na no Shōjo* (A Girl Named Nada) is a story about a fifteen-year-old Japanese-Brazilian girl named Ariko living in contemporary Rio de Janeiro who lost her mother when she was five. Like Iko in *Last Run*, Ariko also goes on a journey to seek her mother's birthplace. In *Kiki ni Deatta Hitobito: Majo no Takkyūbin Tokubetsu Hen* (People Who Met Kiki: Kiki's Delivery Service Special Edition), a young girl, Sono, loses her father and mother in a quick succession and goes on a journey to look for a place to live. Neneko, the female protagonist in the story *Neneko-san no Dobutsu Shashin Kan* (Neneko's Animal Photo Studio), loses her mother and father as a baby. Both of them used to be photographers, and twenty-nine-year-old Neneko eventually takes over her mother's animal photo studio. A mysterious young girl named Keke from *Kiki to Mou Hitori no Majo* (Kiki and Another Witch) does not remember her mother for the same reason of losing her beloved mother. In all of these stories, characters lose their parents at a young age and grow up with strong feelings of sadness and loss. Kadono's books are beloved not just by children but also grown-ups because they offer an emotional outlet for the grief children feel when they lose loved ones or experience abandonment, as well as an empowering way to move beyond that grief.

Stories of Family Relationship

While Kadono's absent mother had a deep impact on her childhood, her storyteller father became an emotional backbone for her after her mother's death. He told her everything from Japanese folktales to stories of historical heroes, and even the plots of romantic movies. Daily bedtime story sessions with her father eventually helped Kadono to overcome her emotional struggles so that she was able to develop resilience and a sense of hope. She recalls story time with her father as her happiest childhood moments. There is no denying that such family storytelling sessions had a strong influence on her writing. In addition to her personal memories, her books also draw upon Japanese traditions and histories for various story motifs. For instance, during the Buddhist ancestral rites known as Obon, Kadono's father used to light a small fire at the gate of their house to send his greetings to departed souls. He warned spiritual visitors by whispering, "Watch your step." Kadono has said that the way her father treated ancestral souls with such calm respect gave her a sense of the realism of the invisible world (Sankei News). The relationship between humans and spirits is a common thread running through her writing. Her interest in death and the concept of interconnection that bridges two worlds between the dead and living humans ultimately became an imaginative tool in her literary world.

Kadono's books often rethink universal traditional family structures. Characters' ages are playfully set, and the concept of spirits or souls is creatively used to create a non-traditional family structure. For instance, Iko, an energetic seventy-four-year-old in *Last Run*, travels around four hundred miles by motorcycle from Tokyo to Okayama prefecture to discover her mother's roots. In the old house where Iko's mother spent her childhood, she happens to meet a twelve-year-old girl, Fumiko. Iko later finds out that the girl is a ghost of her mother who is only visible to Iko. They become friends and take a journey together to Tokyo. On the way home, they get to know each other and their friendship becomes strong. In *A Girl Named Nada*, a Japanese-Brazilian girl named Ariko runs into a girl named Nada at a movie theater in Rio de Janeiro. Nada is actually her twin sister, who died right after her birth. Nada and Ariko become friends, and eventually, Ariko goes on a journey to find mother's roots in Portugal while Nada encourages her.

Childhood During World War II

World War II (WWII) is another hardship that Kadono experienced personally. Her childhood was full of suffering and privations from the extreme shortage of resources and food in Japan due to the war. This wartime hardship she experienced is portrayed in two of her books. The hardships of war often disrupt family structures and everyday life. In her war fiction, Kadono asks who is responsible for these losses. *The Forest with a Tunnel 1945* portrays a journey that the young protagonists take to find safe shelter during WWII. In this work of historical fiction, a little girl named Iko ends up living with her grandmother and later on with her stepmother after her mother passes away. As the war rages, Iko and her family have to evacuate from the big city of Tokyo to a safer rural area. Relocating is very challenging, as they have to adjust to a new environment and accustom themselves to a new school, new people, and new local accents. In *The Forest with a Tunnel 1945*, Kadono illustrates how developing new relationships means adopting new cultures and ways of communicating and accepting a new family. Young children often derive a sense of safety from familiarity; for Iko, language differences and unfamiliar surroundings in a new town worsen her sense of uneasiness and isolation.

People Who Met Kiki includes a short story about a family by the name of Usuno and the mayor of the town of Koriko, where the witch Kiki lives. The Usuno family actually comes from a shadow world in which people have no physical embodiment. *The Forest with a Tunnel 1945* features a military deserter hiding in the forest. His shadow is visible only to Iko. People assume that the deserter is a betrayer of Japan, but Iko does not think so. His courage in opting out of the war ultimately impresses Iko more than it would if he had fought. As we can see in these stories, humans and spiritual characters develop relationships of mutual respect. Those spiritual characters symbolize minor voices in society that highlight social prejudice and how to challenge it and make changes for better. In these books, spiritual beings help the human protagonists to stay hopeful and positively challenge them to pursue a meaningful life.

Kadono's war experiences in her books do not focus on atrocities but rather on the power of family and community. For Iko, being separated from her father and grandmother in Tokyo makes her sad and

lonely. In *Kutsuya no Tasuke-san* (Tasuke, A Shoemaker), a little girl develops a relationship with Tasuke, a shoemaker in her neighborhood. Even though he has no wedding plan yet, Tasuke makes new leather shoes for his own wedding before he gets drafted. He also makes a pair of red leather shoes for the little girl to fulfill her wish. She wears them to the Shichi-Go-San festival, which celebrates the growth of children. Such shoes are a luxury during wartime life, but shoes become an essential item for both the little girl and Tasuke to enjoy moments of happiness, taking their minds off the great hardship they are enduring.

Migration to Brazil and World Travel

Kadono often writes about different cultures, languages, places, foods, and people, utilizing richly embedded cultural illustrations of European and South American cultures as well as her native Japanese. The two years she spent living in Brazil, from the ages of twenty-five to twenty-seven, had a strong influence on her work. When she was thirty-five, she debuted as a children's author with the nonfiction story *Ruijinnyo Shōnen, Burajiru o Tazunete* (Brazil and My Friend Luizinho). The story is based on Kadono's personal experience with a twelve-year-old Brazilian boy who lived in the same apartment complex as Kadono in Sao Paulo. He was very neighborly and taught her the samba dance and Portuguese. In 2016, Kadono published another novel set in Brazil, *A Girl Named Nada*, telling the story of Ariko, a teenage girl, and her Japanese father, who migrated to Brazil when he was nineteen, living in contemporary Rio de Janeiro. *Zubon Sencyo-san no Hanashi* (Stories of Captain Pants) tells a story of an intergenerational relationship between an old sea captain who has made a voyage around the world and a sickly and shy boy named Ken living in Japan. Both of them are deeply lonely, but the captain tells unforgettable stories and shares memories of his journeys that give Ken courage and confidence. These books would not have existed without Kadono's actual experiences living in Brazil. Japanese immigrants in South America have long been forgotten; Kadono's books raise awareness of their history and fate.

Strong Girl Protagonists and Social Marginality

In Western children's literature, ghosts are frequently depicted as ghoulish and scary, and are associated with fear and darkness. They are not common char-

acters, especially in children's literature in the United States. In Kadono's stories, however, spiritual characters appear that reflect the Japanese cultural ethos, in which nature and natural surroundings are believed to possess their own spirits that are not malevolent, but neutral. In Kadono's literature, ghosts or other spiritual beings are not necessarily dark or dangerous but are subjects with which the protagonists build relationships. They often play important roles as they appear almost like human characters living in the human world. Sometimes they live alone, but they have friends and families and are often related to the protagonists. These spiritual beings may symbolize socially neglected people. Kiki's witch identity and her desire to be normal like other girls show that her social marginality is also a kind of power, giving her a sense of self-affirmation.

Kadono's books tend to have strong girl protagonists, and boy characters often support girl characters' growth. Those girl protagonists are not born brave but have insecurities like any human. Kiki's journey to her new town shows her struggle to deal with her witch identity, which often puts her in vulnerable situations as people expect magic from her or compare her to other girls. Ultimately, her problems get solved through building strong relationships with people and institutions—including the cat company, Jiji, and friends like Tombo, Mrs. Osono, and her parents. In *Kiki's Delivery Service*, as Kiki is asked to deliver various items, including herself, Kadono highlights different people and creatures that are marginalized in society: an old lady who has memory problems, a friend of Kiki's who is an only parent, tail-less animals, and a witch's daughter who lost her mom.

Grandpa's Soup, *Osoto ga Kieta!* (The Outside Has Disappeared), and *People Who Met Kiki* are good examples of that, too. These books depict the emotional challenges that result from a family loss and difficult living environment and also ways to cope through forging other relationships. In *Grandpa's Soup*, an old man loses his partner and must learn to keep house for himself. Cooking the same kind of soup that his partner used to make helps him to recover from his pain. Most of all, sharing his soup with his new friends helps him to gradually recover. *The Outside Has Disappeared* depicts an old lady named Chira and a black-and-white cat living in a small house screened by tall buildings. Hoping to see the beauty of nature

outside her house, Chira draws trees, flowers, and birds on the frosted window. Her dream becomes reality. Chira and the cat get a chance to move to a house surrounded by a beautiful green park. *People Who Met Kiki* tells the life story of Osono, the wife of a bakery owner. Osono is a dependably cheerful lady who helps Kiki find a place to stay and work. However, she also has sad childhood memories of losing her parents when she was a child. She shuts herself away from society and takes a journey to look for her true home. Starting a new bakery and meeting a partner help her begin a new chapter in life.

Concluding Thoughts

We are very excited that Eiko Kadono's children's books are in the spotlight again after she received the Hans Christian Andersen Award this year. Her books help young readers develop a sense of agency, no matter what their background. They also invite us to look around and appreciate our neighbors and surroundings. Japan may be just a country in Asia to Westerners, but Kadono's books encompass bigger worlds—both geographically and spiritually. They also contain important messages about accepting differences and helping each other. Kadono shares a different interpretation of spiritual beings and witches, inviting us to rethink how we conceive of marginalized members of society and how we connect them to our communities. Social marginality becomes a powerful tool for storytelling as we learn about others through Kadono's powerful children and girl protagonists.

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YOO KYUNG SUNG is an Associate Professor in Department of Language Literacy & Sociocultural Studies in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She teaches a range of children's literature and literacy courses.



JUNKO SAKOI is currently the Coordinator of Professional Development and Multicultural Integration for the Tucson Unified School District in Tucson, Arizona. She develops multicultural curricula for the district and provides implementation support to the district's K-12 teachers. Her research interests include children's literature, popular culture, and visual storytelling, Kamishibai.

HCA-2018 Winner Igor Oleynikov: Never Stop Asking Questions

Ekaterina Eskina



Igor Oleynikov is one of the most appreciated contemporary Russian illustrators. He has illustrated so many and such various books that it could be enough for several persons' professional careers. The worlds that he creates spellbind both children and grown-ups. His artistic vision is unique, his space is vast, and his characters are unusual. His illustrations are very dynamic—sometimes they look like cinema shots. Oleynikov's interpretation of classical and traditional pieces of literature is always surprising; it is never what you expect. Any new edition with his art is an important event for connoisseurs of illustrated books.

The books illustrated by Igor Oleynikov vary in genres: from fairy-tales and myths to science fiction, from fantasy to the WWII memories, from the Bible to Soviet avant-garde poetry. Like a pioneer of

the Age of Discovery, he is never afraid of exploring the new illustration grounds, eager to try his hand at difficult texts' interpretation and to challenge the most complicated topics. He admits to preferring the stories where the writer does not go too deeply into describing all the daily life details—so that he, the illustrator, is given space for his own imagination. For the same reason, he prefers illustrating writers from the past to contemporary ones, so no one would protest against the original plot's interpretation. In total, Igor Oleynikov has more than eighty books, with his illustrations published by various publishing houses in Russia and abroad—which makes him one of the most highly demanded contemporary Russian illustrators.

As many prolific artists, Oleynikov has a versatile background. Not having any artistic degree, he spent

his early career years in Soyuzmultfilm, the main animation studios in Russia, and then nearly ten years in the Russian branch of BBC's Christmas Films Studio. At first, he was mostly a backgrounds artist, and then he gradually reached the position of an art director. The years in animation without a doubt have brought to his style the dynamic approach to narrative, the dramatic viewpoints, and a brilliant understanding of the right pace for each story he had to illustrate. Oleynikov's personages are incredibly vivid—also thanks to his animation background. He got used to paying particular attention to movement, unusual angles, expressive poses, and mimics. He is not interested in drawing an elegant portrait of a still standing person; he takes his audience to a film set, lets the readers take a sneak peak of the shooting process and see with their own eyes what miracle happens when "...and action!" is still tinkling in their ears.

Igor Oleynikov's first book, *I've Been in the Computer City*, was published in 1984, but he fully dedicated himself to illustration from the second half of the 1990s, seeking more artistic freedom and independence in decision-making. In the early 1990s, Oleynikov, among many talented Russian artists, collaborated with the innovative *Tramway* magazine, the ultimate perestroika-spirited periodical for the kids of the new generation. Its ironic texts were full of charismatic, funny, unforgettable personages—a general who turned into an ant, a dad and a son who learned to fly but got quickly bored, and many others. The magazine format itself required developing the character with just one or two pictures, and this is how Oleynikov became a "sprinter" illustrator—able to describe his heroes in a particularly short "distance."

The characters created at the beginning of his career as an illustrator are incredibly captivating—exactly the image one would expect of a fairy-tale animal, a beloved teddy-bear, or a mischievous boy next door—just as your childhood best friend was. After years of experiments with diverse illustration media, Oleynikov obtained this effect by his particular artistic techniques: first the oil paint and then gouache paint combined with the dry brush, worn rags, or old brooms. Such a technique permitted the artist to create numerous vivid, dynamic images in short periods of time and to be one of the most productive contemporary Russian illustrators. This sketchy style never really left him: even among his

serious and dramatic creations of the 2010s sometimes appear books like *The Whaler Cat* (2011), *Uncle Remus Tales* (2012; 2013), or *The Tales about Bonka The Cat and Everyone Else* (2016), full of charismatic animal personages. The illustrator confesses to liking the poor, wretched, simple characters more than the glamorous princesses or elegant fairy queens, and his dry brush drawings suit this artistic preference perfectly.

Oleynikov's talent has been highly appreciated even abroad. In 2007, the US publishing house Simon & Schuster Books commissioned him the illustrations for *Mahalia Mouse Goes to College*. The story of a mouse graduating from Harvard became another one in a row of Oleynikov's successful international projects—among which were books for the Grimm Press, NordSüd Verlag, Fabbri Editore, and Japanese and Korean publishing houses. The artist remembers that while working with the American editors, he paid an extreme attention to the details and experimented a lot with unusual composition solutions. The story is shown from the tiny mouse's point of view, and this has required modifying the scale for every scene: when Mahalia for the first time sneaks into a lecture hall, it seems to her as an endless frightening canyon; but when in one of the closing scenes she happily greets her coursemates, the angle chosen by the artist makes the mouse look big enough even among the sumptuous Harvard buildings.

Mahalia Mouse is full of expressive small details—that is what makes Oleynikov's personages so credible. He is always curious to know what buttons the mouse would use to build her tiny house, which journals she would cut to make herself a raincoat, or how her minuscule computer would look like. Oleynikov likes to draw imagining himself in the given environment and asking all sorts of questions about how this environment can look like.

While exploring the possibilities of using cartoon techniques in book-character development, Oleynikov was also improving the whole look of his illustration series, eager to achieve the desired tone for each book. One of his first big book art achievements came out in the year 2006: Hans Christian Andersen's *Nightingale*, published by a Taiwanese Grimm Press. The fairy tale, as seen by Oleynikov, turned out to be a delicate, surreal, and wistful story—a chinoiserie-style dream. The technique used by the artist fits perfectly to draw all the misty air,



gauze, and clouds and to get the right atmosphere. The static backgrounds, typical of the artist's early animation films, are well suited for an Orient-located tale; any excessive movement would have ruined the meditative pace of the story. The lightest picturesque instability is created by the tiny strokes, dots, and points of various shades of one and the same color. There are no empty spaces—for every page, the artist supplies at least one tiny picture. The modest

songbird appears on a Chinese fan and on a Japanese cherry-tree in blossom, leading the main tune.

If Oleynikov's early books can be compared to screenshots of a film's peak moments, then his work on the children's poetry anthology *Everyone Runs, Flies, and Jumps* (2010) by the avant-garde poet Daniil Kharms is more a collection of short films set in Moscow of the 1930s. Nearly every piece of poetry is long enough to occupy at least one big-format spread-

sheet, thus constraining the artist to show each story in progress: A small group of comical-in-their-seriousness boy scouts marching in the narrow backstreet turns out to be a part of an enormous football fans' crowd invading an Old Moscow square. A traveler who has left, never to come home again, becomes a column of fourteen men, each one older than the previous one and the last of them disappearing into the dark forest. A tiny dog politician, rioting against an enormous hound, gets smaller the more furious he becomes, while a splash of red color behind him gets bigger and bigger—a clear and powerful metaphor of the fanatical political rallies of the pre-WWII years. Oleynikov sketches graffiti on house walls and gets everyone in the crowd looking at the flying cat wearing a historically accurate dress. The illustrator visualizes the text, adding his original interpretation without losing a tiny bit of the author's absurdist irony. All the stories, initially not connected one to another, in Oleynikov's illustrations join together in a unique picture of a merry childhood—with all its courtyard adventures, dreams, and shaggy dogs.

Oleynikov refines his skill of illustrating the humorous nonsense poetry in Nobel-prize poet Josef Brodsky's *Who Discovered America* (2013) and *Working Class ABC* (2013), as well as Edward Lear's limericks collection *The Impossible Things* (2014). These are the exceptional examples of Oleynikov's mature style and of his ability to build a complex and elegant visual assembly out of raw text material. All these books were an uneasy task as the elements to illustrate were not connected logically, but the artist saw it as a good occasion to let his fantasy go, and the final result was really appreciated by the readers. In *Who Discovered America*, a schoolbook's torn sheets fly by the side of William Shakespeare, sailing on an ancient Greek ship towards Manhattan, then slide over the cannons of gloomy Napoleon Buonarrotti, crowned with a Native American feather headwear, and so on, following the discussion of schoolboys totally confused among various historical personages. On the last spreadsheet of *The Impossible Things*, "the old person of Rye, who went up to town on a fly" gets the traits of Edward Lear himself, and his flight above the airport runway is observed by all the characters of the previous limericks embarking on a plane.

The large-sized *Ballad of a Little Tugboat*—another rare text of Josef Brodsky published in the USSR—is one of the artistic peaks reached by Igor Oleynikov.

This poetry turned into an amazingly beautiful and touching series of illustrations. The artist widely uses dramatic viewpoints and eloquent details, small stories within the main story: a photo of a pretty sea-cook in the crane driver's cabin, a night trolleybus riding over a giant ship's deck, flying fish migrating with a parrots' flock. Here Oleynikov has nearly reached perfection in managing the page, constructing a clear and captivating composition and still leaving enough of blank "breathing" space. As before, the illustrator perfectly captures the original text's mood, tender and slightly melancholic. Just as China in *The Nightingale* was a chinoiserie-style dream, not pretending to be an accurate representation of a real country, so is Leningrad in this book; it is more an impression, a vague memory of an elegant Nordic seaport, than Brodsky's real birthplace. But here there is a significant difference from Oleynikov's earlier works: *Ballad of a Little Tugboat* is a unique story, a well-directed "full-length film" told by the means of book illustrations. In this particular book, all the film director's layout construction is revealed on the flyleaves, where the artist's sketches and storyboards are put; the latter help to create the right pace for the book. Oleynikov sees every book as a film scenario and the illustrations as shots; he admits to always knowing what happened before and after in each of the pictures. The reader's attention is immediately captivated by the enormous seaport's daily-life and exotic faraway coasts seen through the "eyes" of a tiny tugboat. The narrator, the Tugboat, shows the hidden corners of the docks, presents his friends (the big liners), and confesses his dreams and hopes—so it is nearly impossible not to empathize with him. Brodsky's text is powerful enough to touch anyone's emotions, but Oleynikov's illustrations strengthen the impression by immersing the reader into convincing, masterminded visual context.

Since the early 2010s, the artist has been illustrating more than just children's books. His drawings for Alexey Tolstoy's young adult sci-fi novel *Aelita* (2013) has made an explosion-effect on Russian book art lovers. It really looks like an action film: the reader sees the Red Planet's surfaces from kilometers above, then there is the protagonist's close up; the following scene is shown from behind someone's shoulder. Breath-taking flights and military parades are alternated with moments of silence and reverie, battle scenes are followed by incredible Mars

landscapes. *Aelita* is full of visual references to the art masterpieces of the last two centuries: Alexander Deineka's futuristic mosaics in the Moscow metro, Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* prints, J.M.W. Turner's *Rain, Speed and Steam*, contemporary comics, and Hollywood blockbusters. But *Aelita* is also a great example of Oleynikov's unique illustration style. In the original text, Mars's main colors are bright blue and bright orange; but the artist prefers to trust the science, not the writer's fantasy, and draws the planet's landscapes as seen by the Mars-rover Curiosity, with an ocher-colored, sandy palette. The color design of the book, full of harmony and elegance, creates the image of an extra-terrestrial place and at the same time reminds of some faraway desert countries of Earth. Oleynikov's original painting technique, used here, is based on a combination of delicate dry brush strokes, gentle multi-colored dripping, and subtle contours. There is no blinding light or deep shadow in this alien country. The ingenious chiaroscuro game masterminded by the illustrator immerses the reader in a dreamy fantasy world one would not like to leave soon.

During the 2010s, books with Igor Oleynikov's illustrations are constantly among the Russian market's bestsellers. However, he is not one of those artists who, once they discover an elegant gambit, stop experimenting. As the fame comes and the editors start to trust his taste and artistic skill, he begins to work on some innovative and difficult projects. The 2010s is the time of the revival of illustrated books for adults—the previous being the Soviet times. More serious topics and less joyful stories require from the illustrator conducting a deeper analysis of the text and posing a lot of unexpected questions—exactly the field in which Oleynikov is particularly skilled. Turning his attention to various mythological plots and unabridged versions of famous fairy tales, he shows the readers not what they expect to see but something quite different, a new vision of the text. The drawing style—with rigid borders, often black and white, close to graphic novel style—adopted by him recently is especially suitable for serious adult literature.

The famous fairy-tale poem *The Little Hump-backed Horse* (*Konyok-Gorbunok*, 2016) is still colored, but there are some interpretations by Oleynikov that one would not expect from a children's book. The protagonist, traditionally depicted as a nice simple

fellow who managed to trick the king, here looks more like a real medieval peasant, shaggy and rough. All the scenes from a medieval city life, normally omitted by the illustrators for the sake of the main story's events, are represented with lots of colorful details and charismatic personages. Oleynikov likes to reflect upon whether the well-known characters are “good” or “bad” indeed: Jack of *Jack and the Beanstalk* (2006) turns out to be a greedy and vicious boy robbing the kind-hearted giants. The beautiful Princess-Swan—the protagonist's helper and, further, the bride from Alexander Pushkin's poem *Tale of Tsar Saltan* (2016)—seems to be more a pagan witch than a classical fairy-tale enchantress; the illustrator has noticed that in the text she appears right after the main hero removes out of necessity his cross pendant.

Oleynikov's original interpretation represents with extreme honesty the brutality of many well-known mythological fables. He seems to be the first among many generations of illustrators to remember the estimated dates of King Arthur's legends and to depict this Early Medieval European world as a cruel and not yet polished by the Romanticists' imagination. He reminds the audience that the real events on which the majority of the myths are based are events that we would now consider as extremely merciless, unfair, and savage. Illustrating the Old Testament—*The Book of Joshua*, *The Book of Judges*, and *The Book of Ruth* (2015)—Igor Oleynikov chooses the brutal scenes of executions, vengeance, kidnapping, and fighting. The story is located not in the Judean desert but somewhere in the tundra, in the extreme north, among native tribes. Here is another typical Oleynikov approach; he loves to place his stories someplace very different from the original environment and see what happens. This way, the story gets a new viewpoint—and some really old and classical stories prove to be universal: global and not local.

The Fox and the Hare (2017) is one of the first Russian examples of a graphic novel—or a “silent book,” as Oleynikov prefers to describe his favorite, by now, creation. The key point is that this is not a super-hero or a fantasy story but a simple folk fairy-tale everyone has heard hundreds of times without ever thinking about why the storyline has evolved in such a quite paradoxical way. This is a short story (its summary one can find on the first page spread of the book) about a hare who gets kicked out of his house by a fox and ends up asking other animals—a dog,

a bear, a bull, and a rooster—for help, only the last one managing to beat the invader. Oleynikov is one of the rare artists who does not want to see a fairy-tale exclusively as a funny story for small children but remembers the mythological roots of the genre and poses to himself a number of intricate questions. Why is it only the last, the smallest of all the animals called by the hare, who defeats the Fox? The artist finds the answer by interpreting the fairy-tale as a story about various fear complexes. The Dog is a sergeant scared of the Fox in a superior officer uniform. The Fox, dressed as a Toreador, scares the Bull away. The Bear-criminal dreads the Fox-policeman. And the only one that the Fox fears herself is the Rooster, who represents Death. There are many other semantical layers in the graphic novel: the rich and the poor in big cities, the atrocities of war, and the chaotic nature of urbanization. Choosing only the crucial scenes of the plot, the artist creates a powerful and dynamic narrative.

The characters are anthropomorphous, as in the majority of fairy-tales, but some typical animal traits remain—such as a lavish fox's tail that seems to cut the air into pieces with the white traces it leaves. The personages are also modernized, brought by the artist from some abstract medieval-looking past to more recognizable eras. The Hare, as well as most of the other animals, is a modest citizen from the beginning of the twentieth century, very similar to Charlie Chaplin's heroes, who degrades step by step into a Dickens-style wretch but nevertheless keeps the last bits of dignity. The Fox, on the other hand, is a trickster who travels across different historical periods—transforming into a joyfully waltzing Victorian lady, then into imperious Elisabeth I, and then

into an arrogant Renaissance noble woman, though never putting off a typical accessory of the Russian nouveau-riches of the 1990s: a leather belt-bag, worn over the sumptuous silk gowns. The detailed, colorful spreadsheet-wide illustrations describing the Fox's rise to power are alternated with black-and-white, comics-like framed drawings—representing the darkest moments of the Hare's story, the moments of disillusion and loss of hope. What makes Oleynikov's personages exceedingly convincing are not only these self-speaking details but also the evolution of the characters, the impression of living their lives and getting to know them like one knows an old friend.

Igor Oleynikov's art is constantly evolving. He could have stopped at the moment of his first success, when the readers fell in love with his bright unforgettable characters and his great sense of humor. But, being curious and humble, he never took any achievement for granted. His eternal desire to try something new made him explore a huge variety of book genres for nearly every age. He brought into his illustration projects a deep understanding of the right pace and the right dramatic effect for any kind of storyline. Oleynikov seems to have found the key to the heart of an audience raised in the visual culture context but still enjoying paper books. However, even the great aesthetic value of his books cannot satisfy the artist. He wants not only to entertain the readers but to make them constantly think and ask the intricate questions to any text they encounter. “One should draw for children in the same way as for adults, seriously and honestly. I never try to please anyone, to flatter, or to baby-talk. I draw in the way that I'd like myself the result.”



EKATERINA ESKINA, book art researcher, PhD in Russian Art History, art teacher. Collaborates with various Russian reviews and online projects about children's books, as well as with Children's Books Center of Rudimino Library for Foreign Languages. Current research interests: Soviet book illustration in 1950-80's, contemporary Russian and foreign illustrators, graphic novels.

Farhad Hassanzadeh, the Versatile Artisan of Life Stories

Farideh Pourgiv



Farhad Hassanzadeh (born in Abadan, Iran, on April 9, 1962) is a distinguished and prolific Iranian writer who has been writing since he was a teenager. According to his own web page, Hassanzadeh has written more than eighty books of short stories, novels, and poetry for children and young adults. He writes film scripts and dabbles in animation as well. He is one of the founding members of the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth and was an editorial board member of a children and young adult journal, *Docharkeh* (Bicycle) for fifteen

years. Hassanzadeh has received over forty awards for his books. He was also a candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2017 and 2018. Some of his books have been translated into other languages.

Diversity in Hassanzadeh's works makes the job of the critic interesting as well as difficult. He has written, as Mohsen Hejri points out, realistic as well as humorous stories, fantasy, and poetry (163); he has also done some rewriting of ancient Iranian tales. Some of this diversity may be due to his life. Hassanzadeh was born before the revolution in Oil-rich Abadan, and his family had to move out due to the

eight year Iran-Iraq war. He writes of his experiences in his English biography:

My first writing was a play in the performance of which I myself acted. Little by little I got interested in writing stories and poems. I felt I could speak out this way. But the outburst of the war between Iran and Iraq changed everything all of a sudden. I witnessed war's destroying strokes for one whole month. I lost many friends, too. My family and I had to leave our hometown. The eight-year war changed my life entirely. (Hassanzadeh, "Biography")

He continues to say that he did many odds and ends jobs to help the family, and some of these experiences are shown in the various settings and characters of his stories. However, his creative mind is not limited to his own life experiences as he addresses a wide range of challenging ideas, characters, settings, and themes—such as migration, homelessness, loss of parents due to war, and social taboos that Iranian children and young adults are experiencing nowadays.

Hassanzadeh has attracted a lot of attention among critics as well as academics in Iran; many theses and dissertations have been written on his works, not only in the departments of Persian language and literature but also in the social sciences and education. Faramarz Khojasteh and Atefe Nikkhoo discuss Hassanzadeh's use of postmodern narrative techniques in his stories; they praise his use of multiple narrators, meta-story, and multiple endings (79). Ali Safaee and Hossein Adhami comment upon Hassanzadeh's use of satire in his stories in two different papers. Maryam Khodabin, Zohre Mirhosseini, and Zahra Abazari also analyze satire in Hassanzadeh's fiction and state that he makes use of several techniques such as verbal satire, situational irony, language games, parody, exaggeration, pun, and jokes; they believe that the most prominent techniques in his work are verbal satire and situational irony (70).

Fox and Bee Adventure (Mājerāhā-i Rubāh va Zānbūr) is Hassanzadeh's first book, published in 1991. It is written in verse, and he was the illustrator of the book as well. The little bee wants to see the world, but the fox is so hungry that he intends to eat the bee and pays the price.

Snake and Stairs (Mār va Peleh), published in 1994, is a collection of five short stories titled "One Night of the Thousand Nights," "Snake and Stairs," "Silent Flute," "Under the Idle Tree," and "Grey Moments." Maryam Vaezi classifies this book as a real-

istic portrayal of poverty (214), while Mohsen Hejri considers some of the stories as scathing political criticism (167).

In 1998, Hassanzadeh published a book titled *Amir Kabir Is Not Just the Name of a Street (Amir Kabir faghat Esm-i yek Khiābān Nist)*. Amir Kabir was the chief minister of the Qajar king of Iran, Naser al-Din Shah, in the nineteenth century. He is considered a reformer who was not tolerated by the court and lost his life. The book's narrator, a girl named Shahrzad, discovers that she and her brother are descendants of Amir Kabir. The book consists of letters she writes to her brother, who is abroad, encouraging him to come back home. Hejri believes that, with this book, Hassanzadeh is done with political books and has moved on to fantasy and humorous works (173).

The Computer's Crow (Kalāq-i Kāmpiuter), published in 1999, is one such fantasy book in which through a software on his computer, the main character, Mansur, discovers some commands from a crow. The commands are based on goodness, truth, and honesty. Mansur and his friend are to put the commands into action to be at the service of the community. One command is to find the person who is leaving his trash in the open, contaminating the environment.

Namaki and the Bespectacled Snake (Namaki va Mār-i Einaki), which is a rewriting of an ancient story, was published in 1999; a twelve part animation was made based on this book and was broadcast on national television in 2012. *The Pretty Telltale Monster (Lulu-i Zibā-i qesegu)*, which was published in 2000, is about a small girl who cannot go to sleep because she has thoughts of the monster. Then a very kind creature comes to her room, introducing itself as the monster, and tells its life story to make her sleep. The monster has decided to meet children and directly talk to them so they are not afraid of it any more. In 2001, Hassanzadeh published a novel for young adults called *Fragile (Shekastani)*. It is about a young boy who has come to Tehran to work, but his boss wants him to sell drugs. *The washing Line that Had a Heart (Band-i Rakhti ke barā-i khodash del dāsht)*, published in 2005, is a collection of forty-six stories. Characters like a pea, a bean, a washing line, a chick, and an apple eaten by Adam talk humorously, engaging the child's imagination.

Hasti, a novel for young adults published in 2010, is about a young girl named Hasti (in Persian it

means life or existence) who is a tomboy and in conflict with her father. Her family, who lives in Khorramshahr, is forced to migrate because of war with Iraq. In spite of a broken arm, Hasti is of a great help to the family in this move, riding her uncle's motorcycle. They are established in a camp in Mahshahr, living a miserable life. With her father not paying attention to Hasti's entreaties to return the motorcycle, she dresses in boys clothes and returns to Khorramshahr to hand in the motorcycle to her uncle. The father angrily goes after Hasti, but they finally have a dialogue after which he accepts her identity and they return home. In Mahshahr, Hasti falls in love with a boy for the first time, but at the end of the story, the news of his death in the war is given to her with a necklace as a momentum.

Answering my question about his favorite books, Hassanzadeh wrote, "In writing two books I was very much affected and cried. It was a very strange experience for me as if there are two people in me: one who writes and creates and one who reads and believes. I was very much surprised. It happened when I was writing *Hasti* and *Call Me Ziba*."¹ Faraneh Aghapour, in a chapter of her PhD dissertation, discusses ideology, gender, and binary opposition between adolescents and adults. She considers the character of Hasti as the most outstandingly rebellious youth in Iranian young adult fiction because she is a girl in a patriarchal society. She is under pressure from several sources: the traditional society; her father, who is the controlling hand of unwritten culture; the war condition; and her own identity crisis. Aghapour believes that some of the clashes between Hasti and her father are due to feminist discussions with her aunt, though Hassanzadeh is not enforcing feminist ideology (164–165). Aghapour wrote a paper with Saeed Hesampour where they analyze three young adult novels from the view point of Bakhtin's carnival. They consider Hasti's actions in shaving her head, dressing in boys clothing, and playing football as a reaction against the restriction of a patriarchal society that silences women. Hasti manages to make people around her hear her voice (16).

This Weblog is being Turned Over (In Veblāg Vāgozār Mishavad), published in 2012, is designed like a weblog. Dorna, a young girl, finds in a bookshop an old notebook about the love story of a young couple. Dorna puts the story in her weblog. Each page is designed like a page of a weblog with comments. This

book—in which Hassanzadeh addresses the challenging topic of youthful love—has been translated into English by Constance Bobroff.

In 2014, Hassanzadeh published a series of illustrated books for children titled *Shimpaloo, Jijor and Me (Man, Shimpālu va Jijor)*. The story is about a lonely boy who has no friends except a toy made of discarded material, but Shimpalu does not like people to be happy. Children become familiar with one rule and several mottos in each book; they can even make their own mottos and write them in the book. *Call Me Ziba (Zibā Sedāyam Kon)* is a book for young adult readers published in 2015. Ziba is a young girl who lives in an institute for homeless children. Her parents have separated; the mother has remarried, and the father (who is shell shocked due to war) is in a mental hospital. Ziba's father calls her one day asking her to help him escape from the mental hospital in order to celebrate her birthday. It is a book about homelessness, dysfunctional families, war, slums, poverty, and the younger generation caught up in this messed up situation. The writer is present in the story. At the end of the story, the hospital staff manage to bring Ziba and her father down a tower crane and take the father back to the hospital. The writer phones Ziba, who is standing alone on a dark street, to ask her back to the dormitory to celebrate with a cake.

In his books, Hassanzadeh courageously presents challenging topics, addresses taboos, and moves beyond boundaries to artistically show the conditions of Iranian children and young adults. He manages to be creative rather than didactic, bold rather than meek, yet never loses hope. In answer to my question with regards to the future of Iranian children's literature, he said that he believes it is going to go onward in both qualitative and quantitative directions as it has done in the past four decades—especially now that universities offer degrees and courses in children's literature and more critical work is being published.

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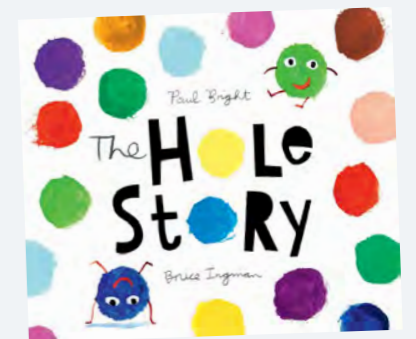


FARIDEH POURGIVI is Professor Emerita of English Literature and one of the founding members of Shiraz University Center for Children's Literature Studies, Iran. She has published a number of books and papers and contributed three entries on Persian translations of *Alice in the Wonderland* in *Alice in A World of Wonderlands*, Oak Knoll Press (2015).

This book has a fascinating concept. It tells the tale of Hamish and Hermione, two holes who live in a chunk of Swiss Gruyère cheese in the kitchen of a royal palace. Unfortunately, a family of mice come along and eat the cheese—leaving the two holes homeless and vulnerable. In their search for a new home, they end up in the king's socks, in the queen's knickers, in her bicycle wheels, at the bottom of the king's boat, in a balloon which bursts, in a coat pocket, and in a custard jug. All these unwelcome holes cause the royals much inconvenience. Then, at the point of giving up, Hamish and Hermione meet the royal carpenter, who finds them a new home where they can feel useful and wanted.

This improbable story delights, as it personifies nothingness and allows readers to fantasize about everyday situations. It also encourages experimentation with holes in the colorfully illustrated "holey" front cover. Bright's fairytale-like story is complemented by Ingman's fantasy-like illustrations, rendering remarkable even the most ordinary things. This is a book (and a pun) for adults and children to share and laugh aloud together.

Penni Cotton



BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

The Hole Story
Paul Bright
Illus. Bruce Ingman
London, UK: Andersen Press, 2016.
Unpaged.
ISBN: 9781783441938
(Picturebook; ages 3–7)

Albertine: From A to Z, the Journey of Combining Opposites

Loreto Núñez

Albertine Zullo combines in her name *A* and *Z*, a pair of opposite letters. This fusion of contrasts is programmatic for her life and work. Albertine is deeply rooted in Switzerland, more specifically in Geneva and its countryside, where she was born and still lives today with her partner in love and art, author Germano Zullo. After her studies at the *École des arts décoratifs* and the *École supérieure d'art visuel* of Geneva, she opened a screen-printing workshop and started to collaborate as an illustrator with various Swiss and French newspapers. From 1996 to 2014, she taught screen-printing and illustration at the *Haute École d'art et de design* of Geneva. In parallel, she pursued a very productive artistic career: drawings, screen prints, lithographic works, wood engravings, notebooks, and objects of different types (such as dresses). She has been exhibited in Switzerland and abroad: Paris, Bologna, Rome, Valencia, and Tokyo. Thus, staying in her native Swiss village, Albertine travels around the world, as her books do—produced in a countryside house, but travelling from one country to the other, accompanied by texts in different languages according to their various translations.

The journey is a very present theme in her production, too, again in an opposite perspective. On the one hand, she invites us on trips going so far as to another planet; on the other, she can play with total absence of travel, with many variations in-between. In the comic book *Vacances sur Vénus* (Holiday on Venus), a young man wants to go on holiday but takes the wrong way and makes a stop at Venus, where



he meets a strange extraterrestrial girl. The anecdote ends up in a sort of distant love story. Albertine puts forward the difficulty of communication between the protagonists at the level of the images by presenting the young alien's words as pictograms. Furthermore, whereas she chooses cold and pale colors for the Earth (blue, yellow, and turquoise), the predominant colors of Venus are red, orange, and green. Colors are completely absent in *A l'étranger* (Abroad): Albertine depicts only in black and white a man's vain search for the foreign country where everything should be better. His journey concludes with the discovery that the foreign place he has been searching for may actually be his home. The choice of sober black and white images accentuates the poetic strength of the

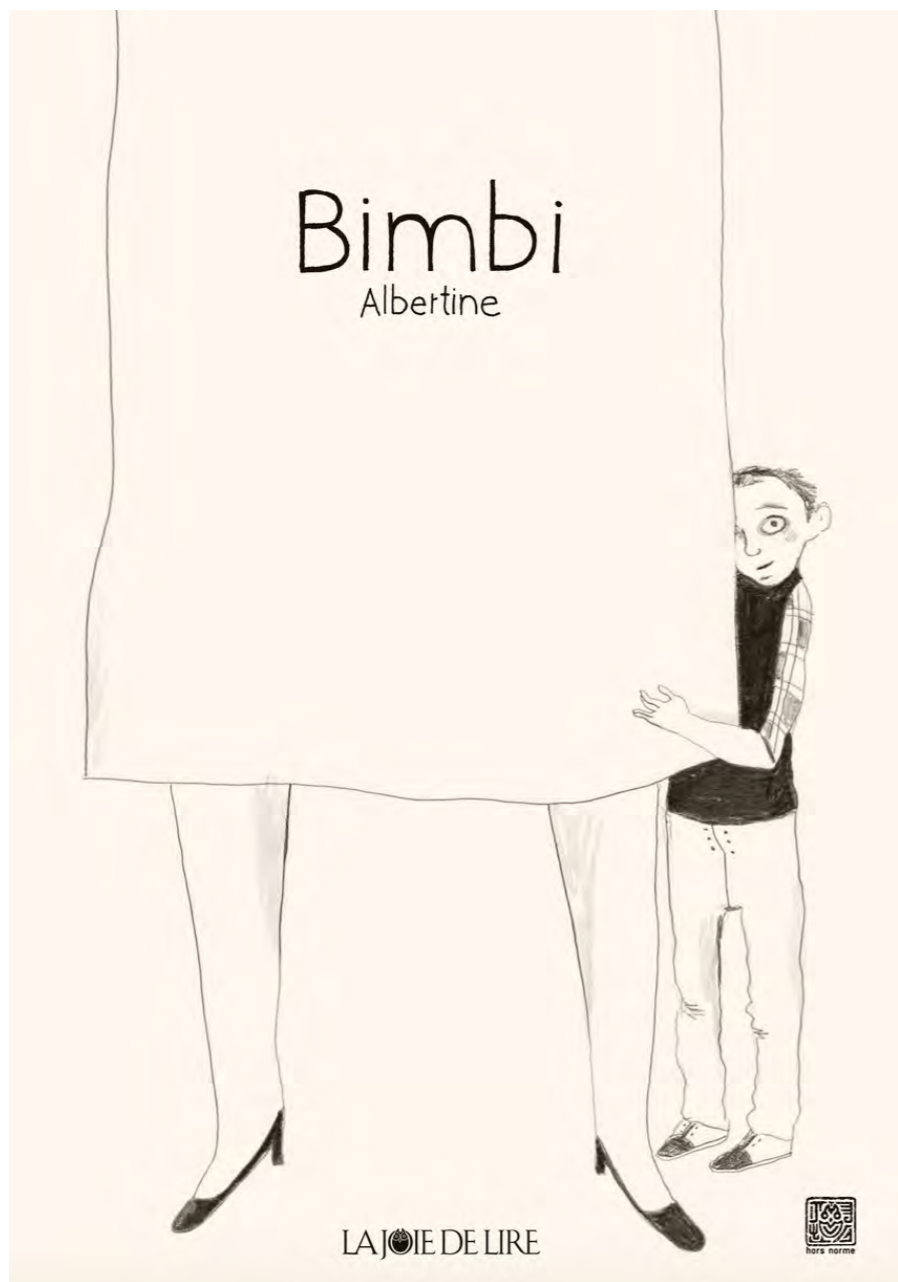
text. Furthermore, the predominance of white spaces gives the possibility of pauses in the textual and iconic rhythm, thus giving the opportunity to reflect on what one reads and sees. In *Des mots pour la nuit* (Words for the night), the journey takes place in the young protagonist's dream. Staying in his bed, he travels around the pages—starting in his room with his colorful toys, going through landscapes full of flowers and sheep, and meeting figures and characters which become more and more oneiric, with the colors getting darker, at the limit of the nightmare atmosphere which transforms itself in a sort of intergalactic journey. Yet the protagonist finds his way home to his bedroom. Whereas in this picturebook there is a certain tension between travelling and staying at the same place, in *La Java Bleue* (The Blue Java), we face a static, almost claustrophobic story; it is the portrayal of a family whose existence revolves around watching TV until the day the television implodes. Until then, the space represented by Albertine remains the same one: the living/dining room. Following the TV implosion, the family has to find new activities. Even if they do not go out, Albertine makes them move in space (to other rooms) and in time (with objects of their past: a dress, a radio set and many toys). While the father and the mother dance, the boy plays with his toys, spread all over the living room. Albertine transforms the closed space of the page in a typical scene of so-called "wimmelbook," a teeming picturebook showing in a panoramic view many small figures, without text or with very little text (Rémi). Albertine has also created proper wimmelbooks, where she invites her reader on a trip *A la mer* (At the seaside), *En ville* (In town), *A la montagne* (At the mountain), and *A la campagne* (In the countryside). Through the large format, the reader travels with many characters in space and time: in one image, through the space occupied by various simultaneous actions, and from one image to another, in a narrative manner where each figure continues his/her own story.

The examples mentioned so far also represent different types of books: general picturebooks, comics, and wimmelbooks. Another type we find in Albertine's production is the leporello, such as *La Rumeur de Venise* (The Rumour of Venice, winner of Prix suisse Jeunesse et Médias 2009). In this textless leporello (or folded leaflet), she combines gouache images and collages based on photographs of Venice.

The long horizontal line of the unfolding leporello shows how rumor spreads, slowly, but always going ahead: a big fish is metamorphosed into a mermaid through the supposed speeches of the people. Albertine proposes the tour de force of depicting rumor without words. In addition to this combination of opposites, the incredible, fantastic story of the invented mermaid is in opposition with the everyday banal activities of the characters portrayed in the book.

This is another pair of opposites Albertine likes to combine: daily life and unusual, extraordinary elements. Even the "normal" human characters are not represented realistically, but stylized; they are stretched in length, like elastic creatures. These long figures are often friendly and charming, their story is touching, but their form establishes a distance between them and the audience, who cannot completely identify with them. The distance is increased in the case of non-human figures. For instance, besides the "normal" human characters of the wimmelbooks, we find superman, ghosts, monsters, and aliens, marked by special shapes or colors or by the choice of black, in opposition with the rest of the image. A character Albertine has represented on several occasions is the orange cow Marta, which is in contrast with the other black and white cows and always wants to do unusual things, such as cycle in *Marta et la bicyclette* (Marta and the bicycle, winner of the Golden Apple Biennial of Illustration Bratislava 1999). The irruption and presence of the "other" accentuates the bizarreness of what is usually considered as "normal"; it invites to question usual "reality," awakens our imagination and curiosity, and constitutes an alternative reality. In *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis* (The genie of the can of ravioli) a factory worker meets a big yellow genie who breaks the routine of the protagonist's monotonous life. Starting in a pale grey city, the story ends up at a riverbank in the middle of a green countryside. Leaving behind his lonely existence as an anonymous nobody, the protagonist makes friends with the genie.

The relationship between dissimilar characters is very present in Albertine's work: it gives her the possibility of variation on the same page, in the same work. As said, a human can be friends with an alien, a genie, or with an enormous black horse as in *Dada* (Prix Enfantaisie 2014). In *Les Oiseaux* (The Birds, winner of the Prix Sorcières 2011, the New York Times Best Illustrated children's book Award 2012,



and the Prix Crescer Sao Paulo 2014), a little black bird, left behind by the other colorful birds, becomes friends with a lonely driver and teaches him how to fly. From the large, orange-yellow desert of the gouache illustrations, we fly in the broad blue sky. Colors are very important in Albertine's production. She often uses very vivid colors. This sort of exuberance is best seen in the books about dresses

and fashion, such as *Les robes* (Dresses) or *Grand couturier Raphaël* (Great fashion designer Raphaël). Yet here, too, Albertine combines opposites: besides her colorful productions, she has created various books only in black and white, such as the above mentioned *A l'étranger*. The book *Ligne 135* (Line 135) is in-between; it is entirely drawn in black and white, except for the bright green train on which a little

girl goes to her grand-mother. As the monorail goes ahead, in a long horizontal movement imitating time (Gobbé-Mévellec), the girl thinks of many things related to growing up, a variety reflected by the landscape Albertine depicts outside. In *Les Gratte-Ciel* (The skyscrapers), the illustrator chooses the vertical direction. Without any color and only with a Rotring pen, she draws the construction of two huge skyscrapers. Whereas these buildings are teeming with details, in *Mon tout petit* (My little one, winner of the Bologna Ragazzi Award for Fiction 2016) everything is reduced to the minimum, depicted only by a fine-leaded grey pencil: a woman, alone, waiting, then with a tiny boy who becomes a man in the woman's arms while she shrinks until disappearing at the end. The endless circle of life is imitated by the format of the production: it is a flip book which can be read from left to right or vice versa. With *Bimbi* (Kids), Albertine goes a step further towards simplicity: the pencil drawings appear without text. As snapshots, they represent various moments of children's daily life, showing Albertine's exceptional capacity of observation and her sense of detail.

Albertine's way of dealing with texts is equally accurate and precise. This can especially be seen in her collaboration with Germano Zullo. The couple has created many books showing in an exemplary way how text and image can dialogue—in the strong sense of responding to each other, listening to the specificities of both and respecting them. Together, they have invented books where the story lies in-between text and image. As they say, "Zullo ... dessine grâce à la main gauche d'Albertine. Albertine ... écrit grâce à la main droite de Germano" (Zullo ... draws thanks to Albertine's left hand. Albertine ... writes thanks to Germano's right hand; *Paquita*, inside-back cover). As with Albertine's images, the couple's iconotextual creations blend opposites: they combine playful humor with serious social criticism, caricature and exaggeration with realistic observation, prosaic reality with poetic perspectives, and down-to-earth perception with deep philosophical reflections. Thus, they address a large audience, children and adults alike—from *A* to *Z* and from *Z* to *A*, as their names: Germano Zullo and Albertine.

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Front cover of *Bimbi*: ©La Joie de lire.
All translations are my own.

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LORETO NÚÑEZ is a deputy assistant professor in comparative literature at the University of Lausanne. She was a visiting-researcher at the University of Wales-Swansea, the Swiss Institute in Rome, and the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Her research focuses largely on narrative (ancient, Renaissance, and contemporary), fairy tales, and translating for children.

Joy Cowley

Kathryn Walls



Born Cassia Joy Summers in the provincial town of Levin, New Zealand, on 7 August 1936, Joy Cowley was the eldest of the five children of Peter Summers and Cassia Gedge. As she records in her memoir, *Navigation* (2010), her father suffered from heart disease and her mother from mental illness. The couple fought, but their relationship had a certain warmth, and they loved and cared for their children. The ambiguous flavor of Cowley's family life is reflected in her novels for older children—most recently in *The Bakehouse* (2015), set during World War II (when Cowley herself was a child).

The family moved frequently in Joy's early years, although they remained within the small towns in the regions of Wellington and the adjoining Manawatu-Whanganui district. The changing background may have fixed the early memories that surface in the vivid settings of so many of her works. Their neighbors in Foxton were Maori; they may

have inspired the Maori characters that populate many of her novels and tales. Foxton is a twenty-minute bicycle ride from the coastal setting of Foxton Beach, where Joy used to accompany her father on the fishing expeditions that no doubt inspired her life-long love of the sea and her predilection for coastal settings; however, the Pacific setting of her children's story *The Silent One* (released as a movie in 1985) was inspired in part by a 1971 visit to Fiji.

Cowley proved slow at learning to read. Her breakthrough at the age of nearly nine was with Marjorie Flack's *The Story of Ping*. (Cowley's subsequent dedication to writing that would help children learn to read was reinforced when her son Edward found reading difficult.) Cowley moved on from *Ping* to become a voracious reader, consuming the classics available to her in the public libraries in Otaki and Foxton. She also became a contributor of stories to the children's pages of the local newspapers—although she had once been more occupied by draw-

ing and painting, demonstrating an aesthetic sensibility that extended to all the arts, including music.

Cowley went to Foxton District High School, but she transferred for the second high-school year to the more rigorously academic Palmerston North Girls' High. This entailed more than three hours a day travelling to and from school by bus. Cowley's unusual ability was recognized by a number of her teachers. But the family had always struggled financially. Joy would have been required by her parents to leave school at the end of her third high school year had it not been for the intervention of her school principal.

So that she could continue into the fourth year while earning an income (this was, significantly enough, as editor of the children's page of the *Manawatu Daily Times*), Cowley boarded with the family of a Baptist minister in Palmerston North. Joy's own parents were religious. Joy had attended the Presbyterian Sunday School in the mornings, the Salvation Army Sunday School in the afternoons, and the Methodist version in the afternoons "every second Sunday" (Cowley, *Navigation* 178)—in the hope of qualifying for the book prizes awarded annually by all three. She had gone on to Bible Class and taught Sunday School. The morally repressive aspect of Presbyterianism was reinforced by her parents' warnings of the snares of the devil. Cowley was to react against the God-fearing religiosity of her mother, while retaining the transcendentalism that characterizes religious belief. She eventually converted to Catholicism in 1982.

Leaving school, Joy wanted to become a journalist, but her parents pressed her to take up an apprenticeship as a pharmacist. She enjoyed the human contact that life as a pharmacist in Foxton provided. She acquired a motorcycle and also learned to fly a Tiger Moth. Her enthusiasm for practical skills emerges in her 2013 YA novel *Dunger*, which represents the electronic devices now beloved of teenagers as inimical to physical survival and psychic health.

Pregnant with their first child, Joy married Edward (Ted) Cowley in 1956. The couple raised four children on their dairy farm near Palmerston North, where they were for some years as happy as farm life generally turns out to be in Cowley's picturebooks. It was as a young mother that Cowley began publishing stories for children in the *New Zealand School Journal*. Produced by the Department of Education

for nation-wide dissemination, the *Journal* of those days is now venerated for its encouragement of New Zealand writers. Cowley was also publishing short stories for adults. In 1965, "The Silk" was published in the *NZ Listener* (then the national guide to radio programs). Republished in the American magazine *Short Story International*, "The Silk" attracted the attention of Anne Hutchens of Doubleday, who contacted Cowley with a request for a novel. In response, Cowley wrote *Nest in a Falling Tree*, the first of the series of five adult novels that she was to produce at regular intervals over the next decade. The Doubleday connection also led to the publication of Cowley's anti-war fable, *The Duck in the Gun*, in 1969 as a children's picturebook.

The personal triumph of the publication of *Nest in a Falling Tree* coincided with a particularly stressful phase of Cowley's personal life. By 1966, her husband had embarked on an extra-marital relationship, and she and Ted were divorced in 1968. As she has recalled in an interview with Bess Manson, Cowley thought that she was going to lose her children. Feeling that "[her] life was also at an end" (*Navigation* 89), she attempted suicide. But her near-death experience turned out to be, as she has described it, an encounter with eternity. Cowley found lasting happiness. This having been said, her works have continued to acknowledge both psychological pain and death. This is true even of her books for younger readers (though not, understandably, for the educational "readers," or basal books, as discussed below). The picturebook *Brodie* (2001) deals with the death from cancer of the eponymous child character through the eyes of a class-mate.

In 1970, Cowley married Malcolm Mason, a distinguished ex-soldier, a writer, and an accountant. Family life included holidays on a property Cowley had purchased in the Marlborough Sounds (a nature lovers' paradise of forested hills edged with tidal inlets at the northern end of the South Island). *Dunger* stands out among those many of Cowley's works for children that are set in what New Zealanders call "the Sounds." By the late 1970s, Cowley's reputation was secure, and her work was soon to garner a series of awards. The first was for *The Silent One*, which won the New Zealand Children's Book of the Year award in 1980.

Cowley's career was to take an important new direction in 1978, when the School Publications

Branch of the Department of Education (later “Learning Media”) began a process of revising and expanding its “Ready-to-Read” series of graded readers. Inspired by the conviction that such texts needed, above all, to be engaging, the editors appealed to recognized children’s writers for material. Inevitably, these included Cowley, who conceived the first of her now-famous *Greedy Cat* stories for the series. But the consultative character of the process meant that publication was delayed for a matter of years. Cowley turned her mind to independent publication, approaching Wendy Pye (then working for New Zealand News). Pye went on to produce the “Story Box” collection of stories of the “Ready-to-Read” type with Cowley (and some others). Marketed by the famously-energetic Pye, who was in 1985 to establish her own company (Sunshine Books), Story Box was a huge international success. Cowley went on to publish hundreds of graded readers, and since the 1990s, her regular output has included trade picturebooks as well as texts for institutional use. The 2003 picturebook *Mrs Wishy Washy’s Farm* has sold over four million copies.

Malcolm died in 1985. In 1989, Cowley married Terry Coles, a former Catholic priest. Together, Joy and Terry held spiritual retreats in the Sounds. But Terry’s failing health dictated a move to Wellington in 2004, and the couple now lives in the small Wairarapa town of Featherston. Cowley’s career as a writer has been yoked, increasingly, with her philanthropy and her promotion of children’s writing and reading. In 2002, the Storylines Children’s Literature Foundation in conjunction with Scholastic New Zealand established an award in Cowley’s name; it is designed to foster the production of excellent picturebooks by New Zealand writers. In 2004, she became a patron of the Foundation, and she also serves as a trustee. She has thirteen grandchildren.

Cowley has represented her life as a narrative pivoting on her attempted suicide, beginning in deathly darkness while ending in a flood of eternal light. Her works tend to invite interpretation in terms of dichotomies. The most recent of Cowley’s novels for older children, *Dunger* (2013) and *The Bakehouse* (2015), thus invite consideration as a kind of diptych. *Dunger* represents grandparents through the eyes of their (initially skeptical) grandchildren as a positive and constructive influence, while *The Bakehouse* is framed by an encounter between a racially

prejudiced grandfather who has been unable to confront his own past and the Maori grandson he has never known—and never will get to know.

The chapter books for younger children move at a faster pace and eschew introspection. Horror is projected outwards—sometimes in the form of classic villains and sometimes in objects like the ghostly cesspit adjoining the fearful slaughterhouse from which the female hero Hannah saves her beloved horse in *Bow Down Shadrach* (1991). As for the stories for very young children, these reflect Cowley’s convictions that their protagonists (whether animals, train engines, or actual children) must be child-like and that they should inspire hope. It is interesting to observe the position of the child as amused observer in, for instance, the *Greedy Cat* books. Together the naughty but (by the same token) resourceful animal represents what might be regarded as the physical instincts that trouble but energize the child and the parent (or parents) the super-ego that urges control. Katie, the child, is—like the reader—positioned (and enjoyably so) between both.

Cowley addressed budding children’s writers in her 2010 online pamphlet entitled, tellingly, “Writing from the Heart: How to Write for Children.” Undoubtedly, Cowley writes from the heart. But she is also an accomplished technician. In the “Advice for Budding Authors” that she addressed to children, she advises the child editing his or her own story as follows:

Is the way of telling interesting? Does it have fast and slow movements like music? How have you balanced dialogue and narrative? Look at the action in your story. You can make it sound fast by reducing adjectives and using short sentences with bare nouns and verbs. Or, in the quieter moments, you can slow down your story by using longer sentences and more description.

Cowley’s prescription is matched by her own flexible prose. In her 2011 Janet Frame Memorial Lecture, Cowley painted an illuminating picture of the development of the national literary context from which she herself has emerged. New Zealand had produced very little writing for children when Cowley was a child. Now, however, Cowley has many

colleagues—the late Margaret Mahy being the most notable among them.

Since the early 1990s, Cowley’s books have featured regularly in the national book awards. (A full account is provided on the New Zealand Book Council website under Cowley’s name.) Her personal awards include the award in 1983 of an Honorary doctorate from Massey University, the Margaret Mahy Medal and Lecture Award in 1992–1993, the Order of the British Empire in 1992, the Roberta Long Medal for culturally diverse children’s literature (Alabama USA) in 2004, and the A.W. Reed Award for Contribution to New Zealand Literature in 2005. In 2010, she won the Prime Minister’s Award for Literary Achievement in Fiction, and in 2011, she delivered the Janet Frame Memorial Lecture. She has been a Distinguished Companion of New Zealand Order of Merit since 2010, and in 2018, she received New Zealand’s highest honor—membership of the Order of New Zealand.

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Professor **KATHRYN WALLS** is Head of the School of English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies at the Victoria University of Wellington. Her monograph *God’s Only Daughter: Spenser’s Una as the Invisible Church*, embodies her interest in fantasy. Essays On Margaret Mahy have appeared in *A Made-Up Place* (ed. Jackson et al) and *Marvellous Codes* (eds. Hale and Winters).

Iwona Chmielewska: The Picturebook Architect and Philosopher

Magdalena Sikorska and Katarzyna Smyczyńska



The title of this essay addresses the essence of Iwona Chmielewska's art—the unique and perfect combination of theme and form her picturebooks embody. Her works create an imaginary space for a dialogue in which the boundaries of age, gender, or ability are deliberately blurred. The artist portrays a holistic vision of the human being, which acknowledges the universal value of an individual's creative engagement in the world. Her art can be seen as a form of encouragement to freely express feelings, and to dream. Through her creative narrative use of uncomplicated visual tools which communicate universal themes appealing to different audiences, Chmielewska emphasizes the value of childlike imagination and unrestrained playfulness, communicating her message persuasively to readers of all ages.

A graduate of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Faculty of Fine Arts), Chmielewska began her career illustrating or rather, as she says herself, visually accompanying poetry (Chmielewska qtd. in Frąckiewicz 325). She did not work with particular poems but tried to capture the poetry's mood, tone, and experience. However, it is in the area of picturebooks where she discovered and developed her full artistic potential. As during her studies the impact of the teaching was on the abstract and formalist and, consequently, against figural or narrative representation, it follows that no one taught her the picturebook art she employs. Chmielewska developed her approach largely through self-education, careful observation, and experimentation.

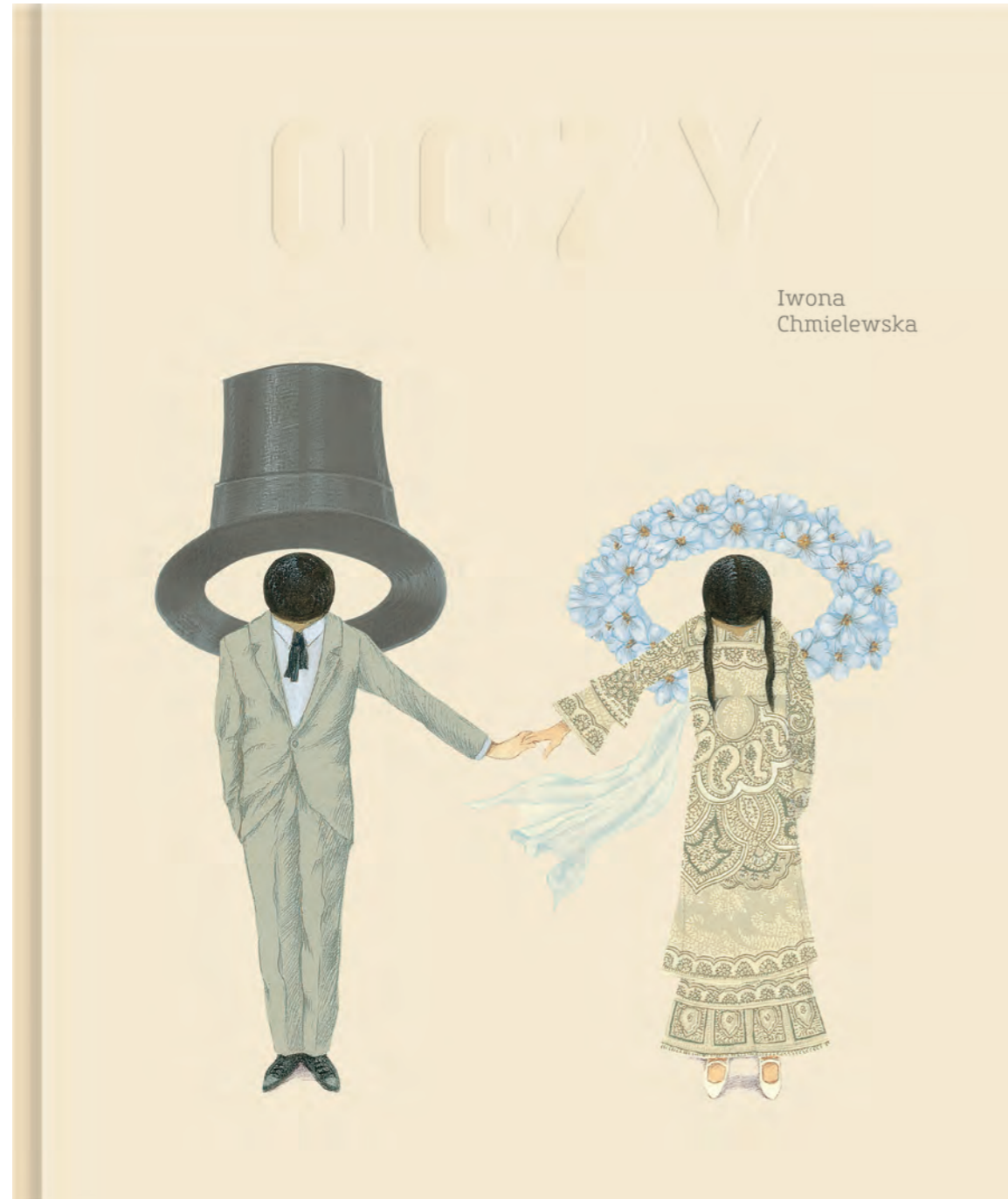
Iwona Chmielewska has written many and illustrated all of her picturebooks, of which there have been more than thirty books by now. Polish-born and based, she has been promoted and cherished in many parts of the world, with possibly the biggest fame enjoyed in South Korea and now her homeland, Poland. Surprisingly, there are regions where Chmielewska's books have not been translated or published, such as English-speaking countries or Scandinavia. The word "surprisingly" is here for a reason, bearing in mind the number and prestige of the awards and prizes Chmielewska has received for her work. In 2007, she was awarded the BIB Golden Apple for *Thinking ABC*, a picturebook dealing with the English alphabet. The years 2011 and 2013 brought her the most prestigious awards in illustra-

tion, namely the Bologna Ragazzi Awards, first in the category of non-fiction (*MAUM*) and two years later in fiction (*Eyes*).

Why has Iwona's art been awarded the most honorable prizes in the field of children's literature and book illustration? Why has she become the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen nominee? One of the fundamental aspects of Iwona Chmielewska's work—the one that perhaps only partly answers these questions—is her approach of an architect. Each work she creates is carefully designed, pre-planned, conceptually complex, and leaves abundant space for the reader's interpretation. The visual effect is impressive, but it is a kind of a side effect, not the aim in itself; the books are not so much to please or impress the readers with their aesthetics (although the books are beautiful and emotionally immersive); their strength lies primarily in carefully and consciously selected visual language, which has enormous impact on how we read and what we see.

If the artist is an architect of books, it means that her books should be inviting spaces—special worlds that offer us the possibility to think, to discover new things, to find our own humanity. Chmielewska's books are hospitable in the sense that they invite the reader to ponder on various aspects of human experience; they give us the space to think, to slow down. The artist depicts diverse aspects of existence, which often link the personal and the social, and they integrate individual and collective stories and identities. Iwona Chmielewska creates in her works intimate, emotional stories in which she tackles the most fundamental existential dilemmas: turmoil connected with growing up and ageing and the experience of adolescence and parenthood. She is also interested in ethical questions—very much so in the books that evoke the memory of the Second World War. Another source of her books' hospitality lies in their dialogical character. The artist sometimes creates her visual work as a form of a dialogue with prose or poetry written by contemporary authors or non-contemporary ones. These books become unique spaces of artistic encounters, and they include the artist's visual response to the content of a given work and her own perspective on it.

One of the characteristic aspects of Chmielewska's artistic technique is her reliance on used materials: the idea of recycling. The used fabric seems an ideal material choice for what the artist is pre-



Iwona
Chmielewska

occupied with—the other side of things, things difficult to see, as well as the importance of memory, commitments, and bonds. In many picturebooks by Chmielewska, the fabric and the texture play a key narrative role. The use of torn fabric in *Królestwo dziewczynki* (A girl's own kingdom) appeals to a memory of pain and speaks metaphorically about the wounded body and psyche. The tablecloth in *Kłopot* (An Accident) becomes a symbol of emotional closeness between Grandmother, Mother, and Daughter/Granddaughter. In the book *Where's my daughter?* the use of second-hand clothes and the time-consuming embroidery and appliqué done by the artist restores the value of used objects and lets them live longer. In this way, the artist reverses established hierarchies and questions common assumptions about usefulness and worth. Through these material means, the narrative voice expresses parental love and care.

Iwona Chmielewska often chooses high-quality uncoated paper to allude to an atmosphere of coziness and intimacy. Her themes are deeply humanistic reflections on life trials, memory, and postmemory, and such themes can benefit from consciously designed materiality—in this case, a type of paper which communicates delicacy and communion between the book and the reader. The paper's material vulnerability (the fact that it can be torn easily and absorb moisture more readily) might also be a case, for it addresses the problem of the reader's possible and metaphorical involvement and responsibility. The tactile aspect may be rendered through the notable inclusion of seemingly insignificant materials used in traditional book production. In Chmielewska's recent illustrations for *Obie* (Both), a short prose by Justyna Bargielska, a red thread used for sewing the book is pointedly visible and tangible in a limited and carefully selected number of double spreads. The thread metaphorically cuts the double spreads in half—alternatively signifying the thread of life, a suspension line, or an umbilical cord symbolically joining the mother and the daughter, the main heroines of the picturebook. Another book by Chmielewska, *Dopóki niebo nie płacze* (Until the sky cries), has been designed by the artist to be provided with a unique cardboard slipcase whose back and front repeat two illustrations from the inside of the book. The book's theme of postmemory has thus been materially highlighted, the protecting slipcase addressing the fundamental human moral duty of memory

care and protection.

Reading visual narratives created by Iwona Chmielewska, we see that she often provides the space for the voices of those who are often not heard enough—children, women, orphans, war victims. In the book *Oczy* (Eyes), the artist reconstructs the experience of blindness and plays with our sense of confidence about what we can see. In another one, she turns old reels of thread into protagonists, to talk about of spiritual development and ageing.

The text and the illustrations in *Królestwo dziewczynki* (A Girl's Own Kingdom) tell us about a special moment in a girl's life, which is referred to vaguely as a day of change. The change makes her extremely distressed, and as the story progresses, the readers confront numerous images of the girl's suffering and torment. It is not possible to discuss here the book's rich symbolism—that of the colors, shapes, and other visual motifs, such as intertextual allusions to well-known fairy tales—but it needs to be emphasized that the book constructs visually an evocative multisensory experience of physical and emotional suffering. The illustrations consistently portray the protagonist's sense of helplessness and despair before she learns how to be the "queen" she has now become. Through visual symbols, the illustrations appeal effectively to the bodily memory of physical pain and violence. This effect has its source in the reappearing motif of a needle, sharp edges, thorns, the torn fabric, and the omnipresence of the color red that connotes both menstrual blood and physical violation. The bruised body that alludes to the tale "The Princess and the Pea" also appeals to the sense of touch and to the bodily memory of physical and mental torment. What must not be overlooked is the way this book constructs a sense of entrapment, isolation, and loneliness through the narrative potential of background space.

In *Where's my daughter?* we move through the story, hearing the parent's voice, and never seeing the daughter, but learning about her through various metaphors, all related to animals. What is important, the artist makes sure that we always see the same shape but a different animal on the reverse side. The final four scenes, which reveal the daughter's identity, tell us much about the character of Chmielewska's work. All along we discover the other side of things, the complexity of the daughter as a person. The sense of strangeness that emanates from the vi-

sual similes and the idea of reverting and doubling images, seeing an image from the other side, speaks metaphorically about the need to go beyond superficial assumptions to find out what is hidden, to learn to see what is not always easily seen in the people we love.

“I believe that in the best picturebooks there exists a kind of word-image philosophy, a kind of emptiness or, more accurately, space, which comes alive only in the interpretation of the reader and viewer. What is more, such a short book ... can and may feed the soul, outgrowing its aesthetic or educational im-

pact” (Chmielewska qtd. in Frąckiewicz 360). This quotation summarizes Iwona Chmielewska’s artistic and humanistic approach: her hope and reverence for the audience, her search for the spiritual in the material and beautiful, and her attention towards the apparently insignificant. These are the qualities for which she has been recognized and admired.

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MAGDALENA SIKORSKA is Assistant Professor of English at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Poland. She researches visual literature with focus on affective narratology and multisensory experience. Her essays on narrative strategies, image interpretation, and the Holocaust postmemory in visual narratives have appeared in publications in the UK, USA, Canada, and Poland.



KATARZYNA SMYCZYŃSKA is Assistant Professor at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Poland. Her current research interests focus on picturebooks and graphic narratives. Among her recent publications is a co-authored chapter in *Global Perspectives on Death in Children’s Literature* (2016) and an article in *Image [& Narrative]* (2018). She teaches courses in media studies and Anglophone literature and culture.

Mr. and Mrs. Hartlief have everything they desire except a baby. When Mr. Hartlief (reminiscent of Daly himself) discovers that the baby shop does not, in fact, sell babies, he arrives home with a piglet for his wife. They immediately fall in love with Otjie-Potjie and raise him like a boy. Great is their disappointment when Otjie-Potjie is turned away on his first school day as Miss Frons (frown) only accepts boys and girls. Otjie-Potjie now, except for weekends, returns to a piggy life of mud and straw.

While the narrative, supported by Daly’s delightful digital illustrations, shows that families are what you make them, the Hartliefs keep dreaming about Otjie-Potjie being human. The story culminates with visions of Otjie-Potjie’s transformation into a real boy—but then Mr. Hartlief wishes on a star that they would all wake up the same the next morning. Surprise! Surprise!

From flyleaf to flyleaf, from delightfully anthropomorphic depictions of Otjie-potjie to a scene of three exuberant pigs playing animatedly in the mud, this book is another example of the joie de vivre found in Niki Daly’s work.

Magdel Vorster



BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Verrassing! Verrassing! / Surprise! Surprise!

Niki Daly
Afrikaans trans. Kobus Geldenhuys
Cape Town, South Africa:
Tafelberg Publishers, 2017. 32 pp.
ISBN: 9780624081258
(Afrikaans edition)
ISBN: 1910959995
(English edition, published by
Otter-Barry Books, Hereford, UK)
(Picturebook; ages 3–6)

Marie-Aude Murail, Absolutely

Marie Lallouet



It is impossible to understand French novels for young people without taking time out to examine the role Marie-Aude Murail has played in the field since early 1985. This central position, based on almost a hundred published books (nearly all of them novels, translated into twenty-two languages), could prove dangerous in the sense that such an edifice might have transformed its architect into an untouchable icon. But this is certainly not the case here. Obsessed by a constant concern with learning her trade and meeting the expectations of her readers, Marie-Aude Murail has—for the moment—avoided all forms of self-beatification, sometimes benefiting from new editions of her novels to correct mistakes (which, she says, is a great relief to her). A literary career like hers might intim-

idate the person tasked with summarizing it, but its extreme degree of coherence serves as an encouragement to take the risk.

After seven years at the Sorbonne and around the same amount of time writing romantic short stories for the female press—clearly, the first occupation is not incompatible with the second—Marie-Aude (born in Le Havre in 1954) settled down as a young writer in an incongruous field, that of literature for young people. It was the 1980s in France, and children’s literature was a sub-sub-literary genre for which no training was required and which promised no recognition. But this hardy explorer had in her kitbag a heap of enthusiasm and many furrows to plough: enthusiasm for Charles Dickens and his “realist fairy tales”; enthusiasm for childhood, which she

discovered thanks to her little sister Elvire (four years younger than she is and now a writer herself) and her first son (born in 1977); and enthusiasm for her readers, who would, as she met and united them—an approach she so admires in the popular writers of the nineteenth century—furnish her with a source of stimulus, inspiration, and support. Equipped with this robust arsenal, Marie-Aude Murail took up the “trade,” a word of which she is very fond.

The Precision of Language

Marie-Aude approaches literature for children and young people with a curious mixture of Sorbonne-style ambition and affinity for the humblest of her readers. It is in appropriating and working on this paradox in her *modus operandi* that she has ensured that her writing reflects her characters with the same kind of honesty with which she treats her readers. She says of her years at *J’aime lire*, a magazine for seven- to ten-year-olds where, in 1986, she published her first stories,

No one could stop me from using the past simple, or the gerund, or complicated words. My thesis on adapting traditional novels for young people and children provided me with a number of weapons, and I have put them to good use. For example, according to linguists, a text is readable if eighty percent of the words of which it is comprised are familiar to the reader. So I could use the remaining twenty percent to introduce words like “caravanserai” and “cuniculturalist”! My seven years at the Sorbonne paid off! But it’s good, in the beginning, to meet people who have convictions, and all the better if you don’t share those convictions. It forces you to argue your case.

She invented a new way of writing which was to impact on French literature for children and young people in the late twentieth century. Her prose calls to mind the incredible tone of Colette Vivier, the first French author to have taken the risk of writing, in the first person, from the point-of-view of a child hero (*La Maison des petits bonheurs*, 1939) and whose legacy was unfairly ignored. Marie-Aude’s professional relationship with Geneviève Brisac—who published her at Gallimard (*Mystère*, 1987) then at L’École des loisirs (starting with *Baby-sitter blues*, 1989, the first

book in the *Émilien* series)—was decisive. Aided and abetted by English translations (Anne Fine and Lois Lowry), it was a key moment for the novel in French children’s literature. Brisac sums up her editorial policy as follows: “Why read if there’s nothing about love, death, politics, or life?” Quite a program!

Literature as Ethnology

A precision of language calls for a precision of situations described, but the porosity of children’s writers to the world that surrounds them cannot always be taken for granted. A protected world, childhood is affected by a multi-faceted reality. While Dickens in England and Hector Malot in France were certainly alive to that reality, the second half of the twentieth century marked a turning point: The greatest stars of the era, Enid Blyton and Georges Chaumette (whose famous heroine, *Fantômette*, Marie-Aude often references), developed children’s stories that were more than realist. It was not until the 1980s that literature for children and young people began once again to serve as a social mirror.

I sometimes describe myself as a sponge that absorbs everything around it. But as soon as I start writing, I become a filter, I only include what a twelve year-old reader could deal with and in a way that she could deal with.

The seven titles of the *Émilien* series (1989–1993) are perfect examples of this literary ethnology: “*Émilien* is not a detective, he’s an ethnologist; he’s interested in the how of things, not the why.” A variation on the stepfamily, on adolescence, and on the relationship between adults and children, this series was to be followed by other orchestral demonstrations: first, *Oh, boy!* (2000), a luminous ode to brotherhood that, beginning with the suicide of a mother, culminates in a solidly patched up male single-parent family; and later, *Maité coiffure* (2004), an analysis of social class and family violence carefully hidden away in a wealthy urban neighborhood. Then came the *Sauveur & fils* saga, a kaleidoscopic depiction of a medium-sized French town observed, listened to, and cared for in the style of a “local” liberal psychologist” (a kind of salvational grocery store with flexible opening hours).

A Return to Plot

Writing as precisely as possible, taking as close a look as possible—this is already an impressive feat. But is it enough? There is a third issue: that of constructing a plot. Marie-Aude explains why it is so important:

After publishing a few mirror-novels, the *Émilien* series (1989–1993) and *Serge T.* books in the monthly magazine *Je Bouquine* (1990–1997), I read a journalist’s review of *Un séducteur-né* (1991). According to him, the plot was botched. “Completely bungled,” as my grandmother would have said. I think that set off a little alarm in my head. I had to learn how to develop a plot, something which is not really necessary in a mirror-novel. But, in France, the rules of the writing trade in which I’m involved are not taught. There are no writing schools of the type you find in England and the United States. So, I decided to examine the queen of plots, the detective novel, and I reread one of the queens of the genre, Agatha Christie, just to see how she went about things.

After researching the genre, Marie-Aude wrote the Nils Hazard series (1992–1997). She then delved into the “fantastique” with the Marcel Aymé-style *Amour, vampire et Loup-garou* (1998) and *Tom Lorient* (1999). This approach found its finest and purest expression in *My Brother Simple* (2004), the story of a big, mentally challenged teenager who has a talking plush rabbit. Marie-Aude has also taken on the historical novel, a happy hunting ground for those passionate about the history of the language, with *Malo de Lange*—which is replete with thieves’ argot and memories of the popular literature of the nineteenth century in which children are stolen, run-ins with the secret police, and the protagonists’ escape from certain death a thousand times. “Giving is giving, and taking back is stealing, as the butcher said as he stabbed his wife in the stomach,” says the young Malo, aphoristically, living the period to the full. “It’s my playground,” says Marie-Aude.

Risking the Female Perspective

Marie-Aude Murail’s readers had to wait a long time before she took the risk of presenting a female protagonist. Readers who found that surprising discov-

ered an explanation in the androgynous Ella/Elliot in *Sauveur & fils*. “When I was a little girl, I thought I was a little boy. I gave myself boys’ names. I wasn’t happy with being a girl,” she tells us.

It was only in 2001 in the magazine *J’aime lire* that readers had the opportunity to get to know her little Romarine—an energetic and sensitive heroine, passionate about espionage, who enabled the author to complete her palette.

For a long time people used to remark that there were no heroines in my stories. I made excuses to my female readers, telling them that it was because I had two brothers and then two sons and claiming that things would be different if I had a daughter. That’s what happened when I was around forty.

The author is loath to personally accept compliments about her first, pointing out that “it’s because I had one at home. She showed me that it was good to be a girl. She showed me, she didn’t demonstrate it to me. She was in front of my eyes.”

Many more female characters would follow, up until *Miss Charity* (2008), doubtless one of her most ambitious and original novels. Marie-Aude had glorious fun recreating the prose of Beatrix Potter (1866–1943) and taking delight in playing with the Victorian England that she knows so well, while exploring the status of women and of the writer (here an illustrator). Marie-Aude Murail’s commitment to the recognition of French children’s authors, which is so sorely lacking, adds a kind of facetious spice to this true-false biography of a young woman who negotiates the right to be an author with her milieu and her publisher. We should add that *Miss Charity* is also a formidable love story, delicately illustrated with water colors by Philippe Dumas.

Clearly, Marie-Aude Murail can do anything. The free-wheeling liberty of *Sauveur & fils* provides the most recent evidence of this. Writing with finesse and, when she so desires, with brio; juggling with male and female characters; poking around like a spy into the present and the past of her choice; taking on board the fact that writers, including children’s writers, act in a political field (as evidenced in *Vive la république!* [2008], a militant novel defending the cause of children with no official papers); and welcoming, in the same novel, new generations of young

readers as well as older readers who have since become adults and who have found no good reason to abandon her. “I want to go on examining the world,” she says in conclusion. “And I also really, really want to talk about love to my young readers. I am gathering my strength so that I can write about it when the time comes.”

Translated by Michael Lavin

MARIE-AUDE MURAIL, SEVEN OF THE BEST

Oh, boy!, L’École des loisirs, 2000.

(Translated into German, Korean, Spanish, Hungarian, Russian, Slovenian, Thai, Turkish, and Ukrainian.)

My Brother Simple, L’École des loisirs, 2004.

(Translated into German, English, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Slovenian, Thai, and Turkish.)

Maité coiffure, L’École des loisirs, 2004.

(Translated into German, Basque, Korean, Hungarian, Italian, and Thai.)

Miss Charity, L’École des loisirs, 2008.

(Translated into German, Italian, and Russian.)

3000 façons de dire je t’aime, L’École des loisirs, 2013.

(Translated into German, Italian and Korean.)
Sauveur & fils, L’École des loisirs, 2016–2018, quatre saisons à ce jour. (Translated into Italian and Hungarian.)
L’Espionne, series published by the magazine *J’aime lire* starting in 2001, then republished in book form by Bayard jeunesse.



MARIE LALLOUET is a publisher and literary journalist, editor of *La Revue des livres pour enfants*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

After the popular *Faten* comes *Cappuccino* as the second young adult novel by this distinguished Lebanese writer, who has written and translated more than 120 books.

The novel centers around two teenagers, Lina and Anas, who meet at a yoga class and develop friendship and mutual attraction. The book’s beautiful style reflects the life of middle-class youth in Beirut.

This Arabic-language novel, co-narrated by the two protagonists, tackles two main social problems usually hidden and rarely mentioned, even among friends. One concerns domestic violence, a taboo subject rarely addressed, of which Anas’s mother is a long-time victim. The other issue, which troubles Lina’s family, is Family and Inheritance Laws that undermine women’s rights. The novel also deals with the identity struggles of children raised in Western countries, criticizing consumerism and the obsession of many girls with their looks—who go as far as undergoing surgery for their appearance. The book is gripping; it shrewdly reflects the dynamics of society and the struggle for change. Anas’s problem is successfully solved, and Lena’s is waiting for further social transformation.

Jehan Helou



BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS

Cappuccino

Fatima Sharafeddine
Cover illus. Somar Kowkabi
Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al Saqi, 2017.
207 pp.
ISBN: 9786144259771
(Fiction; ages 14–18)

Linda Wolfsgruber: A Multi-talented Artist

Sabine Fuchs



“I love being able to invent something truly special for all my books.”

We can recognize this ability in every single book Linda Wolfsgruber has written; each of her more than eighty books surprises with unexpected techniques, diverse figures, special spaces, and remarkable compositions of the visual and the literal. Her tenacity in researching and experimenting most likely originated in her childhood in between the Alps and the Dolomites in South Tirol, Italy. Born 1961 in Bruneck,

Wolfsgruber grew up bilingual and communicated early with foreigners, as her parents hosted tourists in their house to make ends meet. Her cosmopolitanism may well have taken root there. Her talent was recognized early and she attended art college in St. Ulrich in Gröden (Italy), where three languages were taught and spoken. Realizing that languages are confined only to groups of people knowing the code might have sparked the conviction that images are a language without limits. Subsequently, she complet-

ed her training in typesetting in Munich, Germany, and graphic design in Bruneck, Italy, and with her study at the Scuola del Libro in Urbino, Italy. She started her work as a freelancing graphic designer, illustrator, and artist first in Bruneck and later on in Vienna, Austria, where she lives now.

Linda Wolfsgruber lets children participate in her creative process not only at schools but also at kindergarten and cultural institutions, thus stimulating their own creativity. The childlike perspective and their playful discovery of the world in turn provide the artist with new impulses. Since 1996, she has been teaching various techniques of illustration at the International Scuola d’illustrazione di Sarnedè in Italy, where she supports and promotes many young illustrators.

“I get bored, when using the same over and over again.”

Since her first publication in 1983, her artistic expression has been growing and developing for thirty-five years. It seems unbelievable that one single hand can work so diversely with colors, shapes, formats, moods, emotions, genres, narrative, and illustrative techniques. Over the course of her career, she has painted with acrylic colors, switched to tempera, later on became a master of etching and monotype, experimented with collage, and used photos of self-made figures before switching to drawing with pen and ink on handmade paper. She has continuously expanded her technical repertoire and has increasingly applied a mix of techniques, which have culminated in truly multi-layered images. Besides these techniques for illustrations, she works on big oil paintings, embroideries on handmade paper, and on frescos in public spaces; she is currently working on CD and book covers, as well as on animated films.

Combining diverse techniques allows the artist to break up familiar patterns of seeing. She uses mixed media as a technique to create surprising effects and to add value to the original text—from authors like H.C. Artmann, Kim Echlin, Inge Fasan, Christian Morgenstern, Heinz Janisch, Norbert C. Kaser, and Jorge Luján ao—which only reveals itself to the reader upon closer inspection. This plethora of tools also makes it possible for the pictures to stand on their own. Their major purpose is not to serve the story they depict; instead, they claim their own space—which turns into the readers’ viewing

space.

All these aspects can be discovered in *Der Halskragen. Ein Skizzenbuch* (The Collar. A Sketch Book, 2005). In this story of a vain collar, written by Hans Christian Andersen, the text-picture combination looks arbitrary. In one line at the bottom of the page, we read the story of the collar, who wants to marry someone but no one wants him. Finally, he invents his unsatisfied life as quite an extraordinary story. In a playful, postmodern associative manner, *Der Halskragen* offers a well-chosen selection of Wolfsgruber’s work in the form of a sketchbook to both underline and counteract the text. A firework of artistic power unfolds before us from oil paintings, drawings, etchings, and collages, which she uses to stimulate a broad range of associations. The individual images sometimes reference real people and other works of literature, thus creating further layers for the reader to discover. Sometimes the textual and the visual storylines are symmetrical, for example, when we read about the lies of the collar and see the depictions of Pinocchioesque figures with long noses as an ironic commentary on the literal statement. The unusual connections of text and pictures generate new ideas about life and lies. Viewing the pictures is like “walking around as if in a maze and seeing what you may find, getting lost in a symbolic world and finding yourself again” (Marianne Gruber).

“When I am working on a book, I like to do research ...”

With her artwork, Wolfsgruber examines what literature is capable of; she absorbs what is written like in a traditional or religious narration and transforms it in a myriad of novel ways. In her visual representation of Jesus, we recognize that Linda Wolfsgruber not only knows biblical stories but is also a scholar of art history. Her figures in *Stories from the Life of Jesus* (2004), the biblical story retold by Celia Barker Lottridge, refer to early Christian works of art, and she cites structure, perspective, and coloring of the frescos by Giotto. Sophisticated mixed-media compositions—paper collage, watercolor in earth tones, and crosshatching—result in surprising perspectives and various textures. Noteworthy is her representation of Jesus as a young, beautiful man without a beard, with androgynous features, dressed in fine fabric, and accessible to the common people.

“It was important to me that my pictures reflect



From Stories from the Life of Jesus

the oriental scenery and the common culture.” This research can be seen in the books in intricate detail, narrating ancient oriental stories. In *The Camel and the Sun* (2013), Griffin Ondaatje retells one Hadith of Abu Dawud in which the Prophet reprimands a camel owner who tortured his animal. Wolfsgruber’s pictures simplify the architecture and the interiors while at the same time display thorough knowledge of the culture and period. For example, the Prophet, who is not to be depicted, can be imagined in the space that the camel is leaning toward.

Arche (Ark, 2013) is the result, in addition to oil paintings, of tireless sketch studies of padded animals in the Natural History Museum Vienna. The artist focuses her interest on preserving animal diversity. On the first page of *Ark*, in a simple drawing, the sleeping cats are awakened by some raindrops. Over the course of the next pages, more and more animals are featured with the tone and pace of the images increasing in intensity and perceived speed. The drawing method is visible as a swift stroke of the pencil, which slows down toward the end as the ark is depicted as a safe vessel protecting the animals from the deluge. As the skies clear in the last image, we see the stars in the sky mirrored in the open eyes of the animals looking out from the darkness, and we know that they have been saved. Although the drawings appear hastened, they still depict zoologically correct images of about seventy pairs of animals, all of which are labelled. The book is a masterful retelling of Noah’s story. The title gives it away but the story would still work without it. In this case, the biblical aspect would only reveal itself in the final pages, which feature the ark.

“I am keen on trying new forms of expression ...”

The literary talent shows up not only in retelling but also, especially, in Wolfsgruber’s own texts. As an artist-author, she uses the relationship between language and image even more consciously. She plays on words and pictures to deconstruct the literal meaning with a touch of anarchy and pleasure, as well as add layers of meaning. The story *Wolf oder Schaf – böse oder brav?* (Wolf or Sheep – Bad or Good, 1996) is based on the phrase “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” as the covert evil, and Wolfsgruber applies a literal interpretation. In their game, the wolf can act out its sheepish side, and the sheep can feed its

inner wolf. Both recognize that more is possible than is permitted. Wolfsgruber enjoys that freedom; the other side of the personality appears as a shadow on the wall. A literal reading of proverbs opens up unfamiliar and humorous visual interpretations.

Ich bin ein toller Hecht (I’m a swell guy) is a small picturebook published in 2003 that plays with the German phrase *Ein toller Hecht*, which literally means “a great pike” and is traditionally used to describe an amazing man or, ironically, a big shot. Wolfsgruber shows a pike in many different roles, which are puns on German proverbs and phrases (for example, a smooth eel, a sweet mouse, etc.). These depictions play on human character traits, which she deconstructs and layers with literal and metaphorical meaning.

The small square book *Wir* (we, 2017) shows forty-five portraits of different people looking directly at the reader. The artist works with crayons and uses the entire color palette. Every child and adult, female or male, old or young, is assigned an adjective, handwritten and printed in lowercase letters next to the portrait. First, the reader might just accept these descriptions, but later doubts might grow about how much we should trust the pairings: Why should the girl with the closed eyes be pious? Is the squinting man really short-sighted? We discover that the attributes could also be arbitrary, and we are faced with our acceptance of prejudice. The realization on offer is that we all exist in our diversity.

“I am a kind of a collector of impressions.”

Wolfsgruber’s many travel experiences have all left their mark on her artwork and her picturebooks. This can be seen in the work she created during and after her one-year stay in Iran in 2005–2006. In Teheran, she was inspired by Persian miniatures, and the scale of her work became increasingly smaller. She turned to embroidery and sewing.

She worked with paper she made herself and formed in the shape of “boreghehs,” traditional masks for women, or panties. She also embroidered outlines of women in chadors, which she displayed upside down to create the illusion of flower heads in *Der Vogel ist sterblich* (The Bird is Mortal, 2007). She further noticed that very often women’s first names were flower names, a phenomenon she researched more thoroughly back in Austria, where she realized that it is a worldwide phenomenon. This research culminated in the picturebook *Daisy ist eine Gänseblume*

(Daisy is a daisy is a daisy) from 2009. In the book, girls' names from different languages are accompanied by imaginative illustrations. The reader discovers, for example, that the rose is *rosa* in Spanish, *gul* in Turkish, and *raisa* in Hebrew. The book is evidence of a pan-global phenomenon in the nomenclature and identification of women—beautiful and decorative.

Linda Wolfsgruber studies the intricacies of the human condition; her drawings are close observations and readings of the world. As an artist, she consciously decides against a quick recognition of her books in favor of a playful, curious search for the adequate image to complement each story told. Her works show the signature of an artist whose views, humanity, and cosmopolitan worldviews permeate all of her artistic endeavors and open up dense and wonderfully unique vistas. It is this individuality, which she also tries to instill in her students, that makes her work so special.

www.lindawolfsgruber.at



SABINE FUCHS, MAG. DR., is a professor at the University College of Teacher Education Styria in Graz, Austria. There she is the head of the KiJuLit Centre for Researching and Didactics of Children's literature and the Liaison Officer for IBBY Austria. One of her focus of interest is on the various interactions between outstanding illustrations and text in picturebooks.

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Wir (we). Tyrolia, 2017.

NOTES

Marianne Gruber: Wer aber für Kinder schreibt oder malt, muss sich erinnern. Laudatio at the presentation of the Austrian Award for the promotion of Children's Literature to Linda Wolfsgruber 2000. Office of the Chancellor, Department of Art Affairs, without indication of year and pages.

Ulf Stark Fruitloops and Dipsticks, Sheiks, Jaguars, and Dictators

Åsa Warnqvist



Ulf Stark (1944–2017) was one of Sweden's greatest writers for children and young adults, on par with Lennart Hellsing, Maria Gripe, and Astrid Lindgren. Stark's authorship span over half a century—more than a hundred books and a fair amount of screenplays, fairy tales, and essays. He was a brilliant storyteller, with a unique ability to approach difficult topics with a sense of humor. "There was a certain magic to everything he wrote," concluded literary critic Lotta Olsson after he passed away in 2017.

Stark's stories addressed the big questions in life, always with sincerity and humanity. He won all the prestigious Swedish children's and young adult literature

awards, as well as some Nordic and international ones. He was also nominated several times for the largest international award of them all: the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

Where It All Began

Ulf Stark made his debut as a writer for adults in 1964, aged only nineteen, with a collection of poems called *Ett hål till livet* (A hole to life). He published two more works for adults—a collection of poetry and a novel—and wrote for the culture section of one of the major Swedish tabloids for a few years before he started on his career as a children's writer, which would become his legacy. It began in 1975 with *Petter och den röda fågeln* (Petter and the red bird).

The breakthrough came in 1984 when his young adult novel *Fruitloops and Dipsticks* (*Dårfinkar och dömickar*) won first prize in a competition arranged by one of Sweden's most prominent publishing houses. Long before gender identity issues became commonplace in Swedish children's and young adult literature, Stark wrote the story of Simone, who arrives at her new school and finds she is mistaken for a boy. She decides to play along and becomes Simon.

This is one of three young adult novels that Stark wrote on the topic of metamorphosis. Several scholars, such as Boel Westin and Ulla Lundqvist, have compared Simone to androgynous forerunners like the Swedish C. J. L. Almqvist's Tintomara in *The Queen's Diadem* (*Drottningens juvelsmycke*, 1834) and Virginia Woolf's Orlando in *Orlando* (1928). The novel's importance to the Stark universe, however, goes beyond the gender transgression. In April of 2018, the Swedish Institute for Children's Books arranged a day in Stark's honor, and in a speech his editor for thirty years Birgitta Westin called *Fruitloops and Dipsticks* "the primal story of his universe." All the basic elements of his authorship—humor, love, death, human knowledge, etc.—were there already in 1984, Westin concluded.

Autobiography Made Fiction

Fruitloops and Dipsticks is one of Stark's most famous books. Equally renowned are the works based partly on experiences and environments from Stark's own childhood. He wrote several stories about the boy Ulf, lending the protagonist his own name, family circumstances, and childhood surroundings. Some of the most well-known are the trilogy about the friendship between Ulf and the boy Percy: *My Friend Percy's Magical Gym Shoes* (*Min vän Percys magiska gymnastikskor*, 1991), *My Friend Percy and the Sheik* (*Min vän Shejken i Stureby*, 1995), and *My Friend Percy and Buffalo Bill* (*Min vän Percy, Buffalo Bill och jag*, 2004).

These stories take place in the 1950s in Stureby, the Stockholm suburb where Ulf Stark grew up, and on the island Möja in the Stockholm archipelago. They depict a homosocial and decidedly male boy culture of its days, but as Magnus Öhrn has noted, the male Stureby world and its boy jargon are not just mythologizing the gender construction and the power hierarchies of the 1950s; Stark is also aware of them and questions this order, not least through the portraits of Ulf's mother.

Death and Mourning as Important Motifs

Much like Astrid Lindgren, Stark embraced difficult topics like death and grief. He took them very seriously and often let his main characters mourn loved ones, whether human or animal. In the picturebook *Can You Whistle, Johanna?* (*Kan du vissla Johanna*, 1992), illustrated by Anna Höglund, young boy Berra adopts a grandfather from the local retirement home and experiences the joy of this intergenerational friendship but also the grief when the old man dies at the end. At the same time, the newly found grandfather finds a new meaning to life through the meeting with Berra, which helps him handle the mourning of his dead wife. *Can You Whistle, Johanna?* is one of Stark's internationally most well-known works, and the one that favored him with the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis in 1994. Stark turned it into a screenplay in 1994, and for many Swedes, watching it on TV on Christmas Eve has become an important tradition.

Can you whistle, Johanna was one of Stark's many successful collaborations with illustrator Anna Höglund. He wrote numerous texts for picturebooks and cooperated with many of Sweden's and Finland's finest picturebooks illustrators, but when it came to literary acclaim and awards, the books he did with Anna Höglund were in a league of their own. They were progressive both artistically and thematically.

Stark and Höglund's first picturebook was *Jaguaren* (*The Jaguar*, 1987), in which the small boy Elmer is transformed into a jaguar one night and gets to experience what it is like to be strong and dangerous. It also contains a love story and has been described as a cross between *Lady and the Tramp* and *West Side Story*. Their picturebook *Min syster är en ängel* (*My sister is an angel*, 1996) is another one of the stories partly based on Stark's own life. Both the writer Ulf and the character Ulf lost a sister before she was born. In the book, Ulf plays with his sister who is an angel, and a mischievous one due to lack of proper upbringing. Here the crossdressing theme is repeated when Ulf puts on a dress and blond wig to identify with his sister and let her experience the world through him. For this book, Stark and Höglund were awarded the August Prize, one of the most prestigious Swedish literary awards.

Stark had a special ability to write about death as a natural part of life. In many of Stark's stories, not only in *Min syster är en ängel*, imagination becomes a tool that helps the characters cope with their grief.

Another example of this is the picturebook *En stjärna vid namn Ajax* (*A star named Ajax*, 2007), illustrated by Stina Wirsén, with whom Stark also had many successful collaborations. It tells the story of the love between Johan and his dog Ajax. All of Johan's life they have been together, but one day Ajax refuses to wake up. Johan sets off into the universe to bring him back and retrieves Ajax's "star shadow," from which a new dog emerges. The star shadow can be interpreted as a concrete manifestation of Johan's grief.

Love at the Center

En stjärna vid namn Ajax may be a story of death and grief but it is also a story about love. And love is a recurring theme throughout Stark's works—whether it is the love for a friend (as with Johan and Ajax or as in the trilogy about the friends Ulf and Percy), the love for a sibling, or romantic love. The picturebook *Diktatorn* (*The dictator*, 2010), illustrated by Linda Bondestam, is an example of the latter. This is essentially a story about unrequited love. A little boy has decided to be a dictator. He explores what it is like to have power and tries to reign over the people around him, but there is one person who refuses to take orders from him: Sirkka. He watches over her during nap-time and does everything in his might to stay close to her. When he fails to win her love by being a dictator, he instead decides to be a monkey the next day, a creature Sirkka claims to favor over dictators. The dictator theme has been central in the reception of the book, but the underlying theme of the book is love, as the feelings for Sirkka determine the boy's actions.

Stark's works also include more conventional love stories, such as the picturebook *Amos och Soma: Sagan om den stora kärleken* (*Amos and Soma: The story of the one true love*, 2009), illustrated by Anna Höglund. Inspired by a visit to Japan, Stark wrote the intense love tale of two monkeys. Amos goes out to find apples for his beloved Soma, who is pregnant, but he gets captured, and instead Soma has to rescue Amos. Another example is *En liten bok om kärlek* (*A little book about love*, 2015), illustrated by Ida Björs, which takes place during World War II. Fred and his mother long for his father who is away at war, and when this does not occupy Fred's thoughts, he thinks of the girl Elsa.

En liten bok om kärlek also displays another common motif in Stark's stories: the relationship be-

tween father and son, often expressed as a longing for the father. In several books, a boy tries to reach out to his father and get him to play with him. Especially moving is *När jag besökte himlen* (*When I visited heaven*, 2003), illustrated by Ulf Stark himself. Here the grownup Ulf finds a hurt swallow and follows it to heaven to see his mom and dad. In heaven, Ulf's dad turns himself to a boy so that they can play all the games that he never engaged in when Ulf was young.

The Sad Shadow of Pippi Longstocking

How come existential themes like death and love are so central in Stark's stories? Perhaps the answer can be found in his essay "Fru Lönggren i sanningens tjänst" (*Mrs Liarson in the service of truth*), where he writes about his love for art and for books, but above all his love for Astrid Lindgren.

He describes how his mother read *Pippi Longstocking* out loud to him when he was little and how she laughed but he did not. Instead, he saw "the sadness of a girl whose mother was dead and whose father left her all alone with a monkey and a suitcase full of gold coins." "No wonder she made up so many stories about him. Or that she loved getting into mischief. She did it to forget about her sadness and loneliness".

Stark loved Pippi because he could relate to her existential loneliness. He describes how he, despite his family and his many friends, still could be seized by a feeling of being all alone, somewhere deep inside of him: "A sad shadow lived inside me and no one could see it. Not even my mother. But when she read about Pippi, that shadow settled in my throat and smiled, as though it didn't feel quite so lonely anymore. And that made me feel much better." Stark thus loved the book about Pippi because it comforted his sad shadow. The experience of book reading described here is profound, and perhaps it was Stark's strong encounter with books like *Pippi Longstocking* in his own childhood that was the foundation for his interest in children's literature and children's reading, for which he was an advocate.

An Advocate for Children's Reading

Stark was a strong voice in media on children's reading, and he inhabited chair no. 17 in the Swedish Children's Book Academy between 1989 and 1998. He was involved in many reading projects in schools

and was a frequent and appreciated guest speaker on the subject in Sweden and abroad. Many are the testimonies to his ability to see and connect to every pupil that he met.

He was also passionate in working to promote reading in settings and families where books were not usually found. He wrote many a story for textbooks used in schools, and he collaborated with IKEA on a project to write children's books that could be sold in their stores. To this day, IKEA has sold 3.5 million Stark books in twenty-nine countries. Stark was also engaged in the Swedish reading promotion organization Läsrörelsen (The reading movement), who among other things distributed books through McDonald's Happy Meal. For this project, Stark for example wrote a special Nordic ABC book in 2010 that included verses in all four Nordic languages.

Stark's Literary Legacy

Stark's work received much critical acclaim during his life, and in 2010, he was made honorary doctor at Stockholm University. One of Stark's final works was a wonderful collection of poems: *Djur som ingen sett utom vi* (Animals no one has seen but us), illustrated by Linda Bondestam. If *Fruitloops and Dipsticks* was Stark's primal story, *Djur som ingen sett utom vi* will be remembered as his literary testament.

The book is about imaginary animals that no one has ever seen, and yet their characteristics are distinctly human and familiar to us all. The poems incarnate all that is Ulf Stark: joy, humor, surprise, anarchy, rhyme, sadness, loneliness, longing, love, death, wisdom, and humanism. Sadly, Stark never got to accept the Nordic Council Children and Young People's Literature Prize for this book in person. He died in June of 2017, much too soon, at the age of seventy-two.

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ÅSA WARNQVIST (1975) received her PhD in literature in 2007. She is the Research Manager and Director of the Swedish Institute for Children's Books and affiliated with Linnaeus University. She is a board member and Vice President of the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSCL). Warnqvist is also the editor of *Barnboken: Journal for Children's Literature Research*.

Pablo Bernasconi

Natalia Blanc



Pablo Bernasconi is an artist of image and word. Designer, illustrator, and author of exceptional picturebooks, Bernasconi creates characters from collages of objects well known to children. He manages to represent Don Quijote with a bin lid, a pen, and a saw and is able to make a rocket from a vegetable grater. He draws with warm colors and writes simple

yet profound texts. For all this, Bernasconi is much more than an illustrator; he is an original author and the creator of a fantastic ludic universe.

Born in Buenos Aires (Argentina) in 1973, Bernasconi currently lives in the city of Bariloche (Río Negro, Patagonia), where he has spent his childhood and adolescence. Son of scientists (his mother is a chemist, and his father a nuclear engineer), he grew

up in an atmosphere of study and experimentation, surrounded by books and mathematical formulas. That is perhaps why his illustrations and collages are pieced together from fragments of objects that he first photographs and then recreates in the computer. "My parents' profession made me look at things differently," he declared in an interview published in 2012 on the Sunday magazine *La Nación*, continuing,

I enjoy observing and observing once again. From a very young age I was surrounded by very special people. I am a pilot; my father, apart from being an engineer, was a flight instructor; he taught me to fly ... My life was full of screws, airplanes, aerodromes, airports, and accidents. All of that is part of my childhood. (Scherer)

Bernasconi trained as a graphic designer at the University of Buenos Aires, where he taught for five years. His first piece of work as an illustrator was published in Argentinean graphic media, in the *Clarín* newspaper and in *La Nación*, where he still publishes every Sunday an illustrated opinion column about political and social current issues. For that column, named "Illustrated," he has received the Society of Newspaper Design gold medal in 2012.

He has published twelve children's books with text and illustrations, and some have been translated into eight languages. *Quetren, quetren* (the words of the title onomatopoeically imitating the sound of a train), was created with the help of his ten-year-old son Franco, who has drawn trains since he was two. It is an illustrated album with texts in rhyme that unfolds like an accordion. On each page, there is a colored wagon that is part of a train. Pablo and Franco created the rhymes together, in a game of free association. The first verse says, "Quetren quetren / carries news / good and bad / gossip, discreet / change secrets / for bicycles" (rhymes in the original). The result of that creative game between father and son is an unforgettable story about a train that "celebrates the future, carries dreams, opens windows, walks in the clouds, and over deserted beaches."

As an arts columnist specialized in children's and juvenile literature, I have had the opportunity of interviewing Bernasconi several times. In August 2017, when he published *Quetren, Quetren*, I asked him about the experience of creating a book with his son.

Both as a father and as an author, he found the experience amazing:

I had an idea, for some time, about generating some kind of a timeline from the hundreds of drawings that Franco made about trains, reviewing the evolution and the quest from a children's perspective and contrasting it with my own vision as an adult (or an nearly an adult...). More than an image or a concept, what came up was a desire, a debt to myself, a strong drive that magnetized Franco from a very young age around trains, and therefore magnetized me. When such an attractive field puts itself in front of every possible project, the best we can do is face it and see what comes from it. The truth is that rapidly we come across a material, which is full of possibilities. (Blanc, Pablo and Franco)

Bernasconi knows the universe of childhood closely, not only through his readers but also (and more than anything else) through his children. Apart from Franco, he is father of Nina, a five year old girl. In the previously quoted interview, where he described the creative process of *Quetren, quetren*, he talked about his profession from his children's perspective:

Franco shares in my profession in the most natural way, as expected. Play, experiments, and chaos are part of our daily life. Sometimes I find it hard to make him understand that this is my job (we still fight over crayons). Having a father who spends his time drawing, writing, and collecting objects is as atypical as it is attractive to any child. But jumping into this world (like he does) and participating in it involves accepting certain rules, which we had to agree on when the project became more serious. The problem is that now that the book has been published, my other child, Nina, wants me to do one with her... about princesses!

In a previous book, the wonderful picturebook *La verdadera explicación*, Bernasconi had already explored his children's creativity through a game of questions and answers that he proposed to Franco: "My attention was focused on investigating the mechanism that Franco used to answer anything I asked him without



hesitating and trying to replicate it with my own logic and with new questions” (Blanc, *Pablo and Franco*).

Mentiras y moretones gathers twenty-four illustrated stories. In this book, suggested for readers from the age of seven, Bernasconi decided to try for the first time to write longer and more personal texts, demonstrating his maturity as an author. Always with humor resources and wordplay, his stories present fears, challenges, and philosophical questions. These tales and legends are also filled with endearing characters.

I wanted to address a book about failure, blows, misfortunes, the loss, disappointment. It happened that I experienced many of those things while the book was taking shape. The stories partly reflect these processes in a metaphorical way. (Blanc, “Pablo Bernasconi”)

A few months ago, when he was among the six finalists for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in the Illustration category, Bernasconi declared in *La Nación*,

What I’m most proud about the nomination is that it makes visible the material and history of Argentina in this field. That our culture can have a top place among so many countries is very rewarding, and it is undoubtedly the result of the dedication of many people—including authors, illustrators, and publishers, who sowed and prepared the ground for us to be in this place today. It is not by chance that more and more authors from our region are being recognized. Doors are opened because someone decided to search for the keys before we did. (Blanc, “Pablo Bernasconi y la nominación”)

Named “Ambassador of illustration,” according to Alija—the Association of Children and Youth Literature of Argentina, which promoted his submission to the Andersen Award—Bernasconi traveled last March to the Bologna Book Fair to deliver a master class and to attend a conference with other “integral” authors and illustrators, among them another Argentine, Diego Bianki. On his first trip to Italy in April, the artist opened the Imago Mundi exhibition, his first solo exhibition in the country of his ancestors at the Casa Argentina in Rome.

In addition to the albums for children, he has

published illustrated books for adults: *Bifocal*, *Retratos 1 y 2*, and *Finales*, all published by Edhasa. In these books, he starts with an image (real or fantastic) and links it to a concept. In *Finales*, Bernasconi illustrates the last paragraphs of his favorite books. The reader can, for example, appreciate a tin knight and a horse with a handsaw as a symbol of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* by Cervantes, and a whale tail made of pieces of wood, metal, and nails representing the outcome of *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville.

With the originals of those books he set up an exhibition, also titled *Finales*, which since 2014 has been visiting libraries and cultural centers in Argentina. In mid-2015, the itinerant exhibition arrived in Buenos Aires, more precisely at the Buenos Aires National Library. Bernasconi selected 70 illustrations out of the 250 that make up the three books; transferred the original works to paintings; modified them with acrylics, pastels, and pencils; and printed them in large format, saying, “It’s a very special exhibition for me. It condenses many readings and pleasant experiences. The National Library, with all that it means in itself, is a perfect symbol to shelter these works, which distill literature and future beginnings” (Blanc, “Los finales literarios”).

At the beginning of this year, the exhibit returned to Buenos Aires, this time at the exhibition rooms of the National Congress Library. As Bernasconi explained,

One can approach this exhibition as if it were a personal journey, with surprises round the corner. This is how the thousands of clues that make up the pieces of the work are set out, winking at the spectator’s sensibility and the intellect. The exhibit includes interpretations of classic and contemporary books and portraits of both well-known characters and less known, among writers, filmmakers, musicians, and visual artists. I took special care to include material that can be enjoyed by all ages. (Blanc, “Los finales literarios”)

After passing through the Bologna Fair and before traveling to Colombia, as a member of the official Argentine delegation at the Bogota Book Fair, the author offered a lecture in the auditorium of the Legislative Library, where he explained his creative process. Shy, sitting alone behind a desk on the stage,

accompanied by a computer and a screen, he showed the audience drawings and drafts from his sketchbooks. “I can only start creating when I see an image captured on paper. I need it. That’s why I have several notebooks where I draw and scribble in pencil to project shapes and objects,” he explained to the audience of all ages who filled the room. Among the works exhibited in *Finales*, there are sketches that invite us to approach to “this incessant and mysterious alchemy of the creative act,” as the illustrator puts it. He continues,

The sketches are always a small peek at the intimacy of creation; they let us spy and try to rebuild how a complete piece is achieved. In all of them, a world of infinite possibilities is suggested, until the artist defines paths and solutions, thus delimiting the final outcome. (Blanc, “Los finales literarios”)

Bernasconi has also staged a theater performance from his book *Mentiras y moretones*, complete with his drawings and music. That is why he defines it as “a musical play both for children and adults” and maintains that he likes “to extend the possibilities of narrative. It is a risk that nourishes and at the same time forces me to interact and share creative spaces with other people” (Blanc, “Pablo Bernasconi”).

I once asked him which elements differ when writing for children rather than for adults. His answer was forceful and accounts for his way of creating and thinking about literature:

I’m not sure whether what I do is addressed to children or to parents. My intention, in all cases, is to write for the bond between them. This is how I enjoy it when I exercise my role as a reader with my children. The way in which a story, a tale, a book, accompanies our relationships is very endearing, legitimate, and inevitable. Those are the kind of books I like and treasure. My attempt is to take what I do to that level. I think those are the books that are worth existing. (Blanc, “Pablo Bernasconi”)

Translation by Tamara Kostoff

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NATALIA BLANC is a journalist. She studied General Journalism in TEA and Communication Science in the University of Buenos Aires. She has been working in graphic media for more than twenty years. She joined the editorial staff of *Cosmopolitan*, *Veintitrés*, *Ego*, and *Siete días* magazines. She has been editor of the newspaper *La Nación* since 2007, at first in the cultural supplement ADN and, since 2014, in the Culture section.

Xiong Liang: Create for Fun

Qin Yuchen



XIONG LIANG:
CREATE FOR FUN

My first meeting with the Chinese illustrator Xiong Liang was in his bright studio in Beijing. He came to the spotlight early this year after being shortlisted for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the highest international honor that can be given to an author and an illustrator of children's books, but already before this mark of recognition, Xiong was highly appraised by domestic media as representing "the highest level of picturebooks creation in China."

Fair beard, a pair of square glasses, smiling eyes, an implicit sense of humor—Xiong demonstrates to me his distinct oriental temperament in no time. In his studio, there are pictures hanging on the wall; drawing tools, writing brushes, and paper rolls scatter around; and a Wooden Dummy to practice Wing Chun.

Xiong cannot be simply defined as an illustrator of children's books. His artistry takes many forms, and he always challenges himself to avoid getting trapped by conventions. It was through books for children, like *The Little Stone Lion* and *The 24 Solar Terms*, that Xiong first drew attention to his name. But he has also created profound works, such as *The Tales of the Darkness*.

Xiong is a smart and flexible illustrator. He constantly seeks fresh angles and stories to create popular works that are clear and easy to understand. Persistent and patient, Xiong follows his own rhythm of creation. He can suspend a story for ten years, saying "there will be a different taste in a story dragged out from the past; you can see how it ferments on the paper." He never worries about good stories losing value over time, and he is not dependent on the whims of a publisher since he prints every one of his works at his own expense. Apart from picturebooks, Xiong's knowledge and interest stretches to ink and wash painting, prose art, drama, exhibition, and children art education. He also runs his own studio. Child psychology, education, and social issues interest him deeply; non-mainstream music and literature are also topics that can fire him up. It is not easy to sum him up!

Born in Jiaxing, Zhejiang, a coastal province in southeastern China, in 1975, Xiong remembers his hometown as a typical region of rivers and lakes near the sea. The sea-water was especially yellow, Xiong recalls. He showed an interest in drawing at a very

early age. His family moved into a riverside house when he was in the second year in primary school. In the house, his father built for him a wooden attic with a roof window. The attic later became a private drawing room, into which even his parents would not trespass.

Xiong was fascinated with the feeling of emptiness and desolation in traditional Chinese drawings. Every day after school, he would rush home to study the old masters, metaphorically travelling back hundreds and thousands of years earlier to see the work of artists like Zhang Sengyao (a Chinese artist active in the Southern Dynasties [420–589], birth and death unknown), Guan Xiu (monk artist, 832–912), and Xiao Congyun (Chinese artist, 1596–1873). Brush pen was one of his favorite tools for the natural lines they can create. Without a real teacher, little Xiong followed his heart, combining these early masters' works with images from his own mind. However, although Xiong comes from a town that is rich in historical relics and traditional culture—which explains his dedication to pursuing the spirit of ancient Chinese drawings—he does not necessarily have interest in traditional Chinese architectures including terraces, courtyards, rockeries, poplar, and willow trees.

Xiong finished his first picturebook, *The Lu Xun Selections*, when he was sixteen. All the pictures in the two-hundred-page book were secretly drawn in class under the cover of textbooks. Xiong said he liked Lu Xun for his remarkable personality.

Xiong got his first job in a design house when he was nineteen, but he quit ten months later. After a few years of scraping by, doing work for others, he eventually had a new burst of creativity and contributed commentaries and short pieces to magazines, under a different pen name. In 2002, Xiong moved to Beijing. His daughter was born the same year, an event that inspired him to start writing picturebooks for children, beginning with *The Little Stone Lion*. It is a small book about homesickness, and it was selected as one of the Taiwan Elite Bookstore's yearly ten best books in 2005, as well as the store's best open-book for children that year. The books has been translated into several languages.

Picturebook creation was just burgeoning in China back in 2005. Nearly no Chinese stories could be found on the market. Xiong found himself one of the first few illustrators in this early stage of Chinese

original picturebook creation. He studied child psychology to understand what needed to be done and found that the way to tell stories to adults was largely inapplicable to children. Children lack experiences. Children can only enter a story through things that are visible and perceptible to them. Adults can more readily associate what they see and hear to what they already know. Thus, adult narrative skills hardly apply to children. That is why there are only 173 words in the thirty-page *Little Stone Lion*. It is about a little stone lion in a small town telling his own stories. The stone lion sits there quietly year after year, witnessing what happens in the town. Children in the town gain a sense of safety as long as it sits there. But when the children grow up and leave the town, they start forgetting the stone lion. By contrast, the stone lion remembers everyone. The stone lion cannot change his expression, but a drop of tear falls from its eyes. Xiong tells his story through comparison between the stone lion and the environment. Readers build a connection with the stone lion while getting deeper and deeper into the story. Subtle, touching details in the small story reflects an ingenious structure built by the author, enabling readers to get a taste of something deep between people and hometown.

“Few village people return to their hometown after leaving. But if you tell children directly why people have to leave to earn a living, why they lack money, what is homesickness, they cannot understand. I need to establish an emotional connection

between children and the stone lion first; then when the story comes to a turning point, they can catch up and get concerned,” Xiong says. He also touched upon how to let children understand abstract concepts such as homesickness: “children do not understand the world with common sense. I mean, they can understand everything, but how to tell the story is very important.” *The Little Stone Lion* opened a creative door for Xiong. He also found a way to melt oriental elements into his picturebooks and successfully created the popular *The Kitchen God* and *The Clay Rabbit for the Mid-Autumn Festival*.

In 2009, Xiong started the weirdly humorous story, *The Monster of Monsoon*, which he did not finish until 2012. The story is about a lonely and willful monster living on a mountain where it always rains. The monster always looks damp. Mushrooms grow on his feet and there is moss between his teeth. The monster picks the mushrooms and moss, serving them as a meal to his friends, the ant, the slug, and the snail. The monsoon monster routinely takes a walk in the mud every day after dinner, wearing white shirt no matter how bad the weather is. It is only sunny once a year; that is when all creatures in the mountain gather together and enjoy a big dinner of salted-and-sun-dried Chinese cabbage, french beans, and mushroom soup. Then the rain continues. Obviously, *The Monster of Monsoon* is not a usual warm sunny picturebook for children—pictures in the book are so gray and blurry. Those damp and weird creatures make readers uncomfortable at first.



However, after going through the whole book, seeing how these damp and weird creatures live a peaceful and harmonious life in their own way, an unexpected feeling of warmth and comfort may come over the reader.

Xiong says that *The Monster of Monsoon* is inspired by a Gabriel Garcia Marquez novel, *El Coronel No Tiene Quien le Escriba* (1961). In the novel, the colo-

nel wants a cup of coffee, but the coffee pot is empty. He then scrapes off the rust inside the pot and makes with it a cup of coffee. It is rainy outside. The colonel drinks the coffee and feels as if mushrooms are growing in his stomach. “You can imagine what it feels like to wait alone in the wilderness,” Xiong says, “what it feels like when you see no way out. The sound of scraping metal items also makes me



sick in the teeth and the stomach. Then I remembered that in my hometown, the aged people ate rotten food. So the idea of writing a disgusting story just came to me.” But it is still a book for children, as Xiong points out.

Before becoming a father, Xiong used the pen name Xiong An (“darkness” in Chinese; by contrast, “Liang” means “brightness” in Chinese). At that time, his drawings were far from cute and warm but rather self-centered and exclusive, not targeted at children. Whether anyone could understand him or not did not bother him. However, “Xiong An” seemed to disappear with his daughter’s birth. But six years later, in 2008, Xiong suddenly dissolved the studio and stopped all work and plans he had in hand. He decided to try something new. Yes, we are talking about *The Tales of the Darkness*. There are three stories in *The Tales of the Darkness*—“The Story of Mulian Rescuing His Mother,” “Mother and Son Ghost,” “Redress a Grievance”—all of which are inspired by traditional folk dramas. Ferocious faces and gray backgrounds form a haunting atmosphere of depression in these stories. The book is definitely not suitable for children. Each story can really happen any second in real life, cruel and ridiculous. “Despite the times, everyone nowadays can find the shadow of himself in the stories,” reads the preface.

Xiong shakes his head when asked, “brightness and darkness, which is closer to the real you,” saying that “I changed over time; neither is closer than the other. Actually, I only care about doing what is interesting. Sometimes I switch halfway and take up the opposite position from what I started with, as when I discovered that boredom can also be fun.”

Xiong has also made some interesting exploration in art education for kids. He and his studio members have developed art courses for children based on Chinese classic stories. Kids get inspired by these stories and then put their wild and borderless imagination on paper through multiple methods, from ink and carving to paper cutting. The courses are not intended to teach the children a certain technique or a skill but to allow them to understand painting better, according to Xiong. In a recent event, twenty-nine kids and teachers from Xiong’s studio spent two days drawing fifteen characters and a seven-meter-long landscape painting in Chinese ink; then they made them into an over three-thousand-frame stop-motion animation. Kids wearing bamboo hats travel freely

between the heaven and the earth in the animation. Xiong practices Wing Chun every day. Martial art is similar to creation, he says. “In practice, you should follow a certain series of skills and tricks; but in actual combat, skills and tricks may inversely get your ass kicked. You should empty your mind. Creation is the same. You can train yourself, get familiar with some routines. But if an artist creates by following routines and habits, it will end up an instructional story, no surprise.” He stresses that childishness can only be restored after experiences are abandoned. “You have to let go many things when writing stories for kids. Experience is too heavy to be fun,” he says.

Finally, we talk about the Hans Christian Andersen Award nomination and the sense of mission. Xiong says, “In general, I think an illustrator should get rewarded for persisting in some unique thing, like a certain kind of artistic characteristic or humanity. Take myself as an example; I adhere to traditional Chinese drawing, which is rare.” He continues, “So I can say that I am nominated because I am doing something ‘small’ rather than ‘great.’ As for a sense of mission, Xiong says his opinion is always simple, “I would not say that I aimed to, or can, revitalize Chinese culture. I only want to add more fun to the spreading of traditions.”



QIN YUCHEN is a freelance journalist and illustrator based in Beijing. She writes articles for VICE China and Art & Design magazine. She started an open art studio named MUYE with her partner Dalong in 2011. Yuchen also works for Cam Rivers Publishing (UK) as an editor.

Recent Cambridge School of Art graduate Shu-ti Liao won the Macmillan Prize for connecting text and illustration in this fun picturebook. Naively expressionistic full-page illustrations echo the innocence of explorer Joseph as he ambitiously searches the world for animals at night. Unfortunately, the flashlight he considers necessary actually keeps him from a single sighting as the abundant wildlife comically observes him from just outside his flashlight’s beam. His conclusions—such as that there is “Nothing in the forest,” “Nothing in the icefield,” and “Even not in the cave”—amusingly draw attention to the dramatic irony. The hope that he will finally see the forest creatures pressing in around him reaches a climax when his torch breaks down and he is left in the dark. But alas, he preoccupies himself with fixing the device.

The book’s unusual tall, narrow shape emphasizes the depth of Joseph’s search and shortness of his vision, while the sparse, bilingual text in a small, light font narrates in a whisper. A final picture of Joseph examining his new flashlight while blinding a stork wearing sunglasses reminds readers that Joseph’s lack of awareness does not need to be theirs.

Jonathan Klassen



Adventure at Night 探黑
Shu-ti Liao 廖書荻
Taipei, Taiwan: Tien Wei
Publishing, 2016. Unpaged.
ISBN: 9789862116029
(Picturebook; ages 3+)

Negotiating Dialect to Preserve Identity:

Translating Guadalupe García McCall's *Summer of the Mariposas* into Spanish

David Bowles

It is arguable that no real body of Latinx literature for children and teens existed before the 1970s. With a few notable exceptions—the work of Pura Belpré, Anita Brenner, Leo Politi, and a handful of others—earlier books purporting to represent Latinx children and culture merely provided exoticized, stereotyped images intended to make Latin-American countries quaint fairylands and US Latinx simple souls in need of assimilation for true happiness. This smattering of titles was only marginally improved by books from Latin America translated into English.

Truly representational literature for US Latinx kids arose out of grassroots efforts in the 1970s from indie presses like Quinto Sol and Arte Público, alongside the tireless advocacy of REFORMA, the Council on Interracial Books for Children, and similar advocacy organizations. Still, it would take another two decades and the creation of several high-profile awards for this corpus to begin to expand at an appreciable rate.

Though far from an equitable proportion of the some 3,400 books published annually for children, greater numbers of books with Latinx protagonists, written by Latinx, have found their way to bookshelves over the past twenty-five years. The unique

voices found in this burgeoning corpus—a *mestizaje* or *mélange* of regional and immigrant English dialects laced through with Spanish and slang—have provided literary mirrors for the 17.9 million Latinx in the United States under the age of eighteen. Ironically, however, this linguistic uniqueness results in the particular difficulty of translating these English-language works into Spanish, a vital task if we are to support the waves of economic and political refugees that make their way to the United States each year.

Here is where the Latinx label creates a false sense of sameness, putting the rich nuances of individual groups and regions in danger of erasure. Some US presses sell translation rights to Latin-American and Spanish publishers who, upon rendering the text in the standard educated dialect of their country, dilute the distinctiveness of the work and skew the identity of the protagonist. Others turn to professionals working in the United States, but some of these highly educated and capable translators flatten the local color and character of a work by using a generic Spanish that strips out regional peculiarities seen as non-standard or “incorrect.”

It is my contention that the personal Spanish idiolect of authors—or the regional version of the

area they hail from—must be kept in mind during the translation of their English-language books into Spanish. Such caution is especially needed with young-adult work narrated in the first person, as the voices of protagonists are an integral part of their identities.

As a Mexican-American from Deep South Texas, I am quite sensitive to the need for extensive familiarity with northern Mexican Spanish when translating fiction by Chicano authors of the borderlands. A clear example of this sort of novel is *Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe García McCall, a YA novel published in 2012 by Tu Books. Its protagonist, Odilia Garza, is a sixteen-year-old Mexican-American teen from Eagle Pass, Texas, who embarks on a magical odyssey into Mexico with her four younger sisters when the girls decide to return the corpse of a drowned man to his family.

For the better part of five years, teachers across the United States had requested a Spanish translation of the novel, but Tu Books—an imprint of the multicultural children's publisher Lee & Low Books—wanted to avoid the pitfalls I have outlined above, aware that Odilia's unique Chicana voice should not be erased by translation missteps.

Tu Books editor Stacy Whitman has been working with illustrator Raúl González and me to publish our graphic novel *Clockwork Curandera* in 2019 in both English and Spanish versions. Knowing my work as a translator and my upbringing on the border not far from Guadalupe, Stacy asked in late spring of 2017 whether I would be interested in translating *Summer of the Mariposas* into Spanish. As I adore the book (which inspired me to finish writing *The Smoking Mirror*), I agreed at once.

The process of translation delighted and challenged me. As I worked on a chapter, I would jump onto social media or my phone and run tricky passages by Guadalupe to ensure my choices aligned with her idiolect. Though Eagle Pass and the Río Grande Valley both sit on the US-Mexico border in Texas, divergent immigration patterns give my community a slightly different lexicon, so Guadalupe and I often had a good laugh at how quite similar yet distinct our personal Spanish turned out to be.

After I was done with my rough draft of the translation, Guadalupe went through it carefully, further tweaking some of the language to better reflect her vision for how these five sisters and the beings

they encounter would express themselves. Tu Books was fortunate to have the original author involved at this stage of the editing process—in an ideal world, all Latinx authors would do a revising pass on Spanish translations. But in a country where our culture and language has been historically marginalized and erased, not everyone will have the fluency required. I then went over the manuscript that Guadalupe had revised, making a few adjustments here and there before sending it back to Stacy Whitman, who handed it off to a line-editor. I should note that, while not Mexican-American, this individual was familiar enough with the standard Mexican dialect not to have knee-jerk reactions to the majority of unique usages. After the line-editor had gone through and cleaned up phrasings, punctuation, inconsistencies, and the like, Guadalupe and I went through those changes carefully, flagging some that we felt undercut the specificity of voice we were attempting to achieve.

Now we get into the nuts and bolts of the matter. At each stage in this complex process, there were four major areas the team had to navigate with care. The first and most obvious had to do with dialectal differences. Early on, for example, I asked Guadalupe what word she preferred I use to translate “girls” (as Odilia constantly refers to her sisters) because Spanish has multiple options that vary from region to region and from one level of formality to the next (*niñas*, *muchachas*, *chamacas*, *chavas*, etc.). She specified *muchachas*, so when the line-editor changed all instances of that word to *niñas*, (which in our regional dialect of Spanish refers to much younger girls than the Garza sisters), we nixed what would have amounted to dialectal flattening and would have altered Odilia's particular way of conceptualizing her sisters.

Other dialectal peculiarities that other translators might have flattened were *huerca* for “brat” (rather than the generic *mocosa*), *chiflada* for “spoiled” (rather than the more universal *malcriada*), *refrigerador* for “cooler” in a store (as opposed to *nevera*, seldom used in northern Mexico). The combined effect of these and other choices is to tie Odilia and her sisters with linguistic tightness to place and community.

Sometimes Guadalupe and I haggled over fine shadings or variations, surprised at how much dialects can differ in towns only 300 miles apart. An example was my choice to translate “cheap watch”

as *reloj chafa*, an informal and vaguely disparaging phrase. Guadalupe countered that this version of “cheap” was *chafa* regardless of gender in her idiolect. Doing some research, I found that her usage predated what is common in my area. I should add that we ultimately went with the more common *reloj barato*, deciding that, in this instance, a regionalism might obscure meaning for some readers rather than enhance Odilia’s voice in Spanish.

Related to these lexical dilemmas was the use of regional Spanish slang that would seem credible in the mouths of the Garza sisters, especially the more adventurous and borderline vulgar twins, Velia and Delia. Without going so far overboard as to alienate readers unfamiliar with border argot, we spiced the dialogue with a dash of common colloquialisms: *chisqueada* for “nutty” or “bonkers,” the ubiquitous *órale* for a breezy “you betcha,” the deceptive *mensa* to mean “moron,” and *fregada* as a multi-purpose pseudo-curse.

Humor that arises from plays on words is always tough to translate. The aforementioned twins, despite their impulse toward vulgarity, constantly stop short of actual profanity (in one of the cleverest gags throughout the book). To translate the many variations on “what the hel...icopter” with which Guadalupe had punctuated stressful moments throughout the narrative, I had to find amusing equivalents in our regional Spanish, for which the coarse translation of “what the hell” would be *qué chingados* (rather than the more universal *qué mierda* or less prohibited *qué diablos*). This led me to constructions like *qué chimpancés* (“what the chimpanzee”) that translate the impact, if not the actual meaning, of the girls’ flirtation with vulgarity.

The final area we analyzed with an eye toward keeping place and identity in mind was syntactical and mechanical standards. These are drier and more technical, perhaps less important in the end for young readers. A simple example will suffice to illustrate. In Spanish, the adverb “only” can be rendered *solamente* or *sólo*, the latter distinguishing itself with an orthographic accent from the adjectival homophone *solo* (“lone” or “sole”). Spain’s Royal Academy of Spanish has declared that the accent can be suppressed at the author’s discretion, and many Latin-American books do just that. However, in Mexico the older rule is still followed strictly, so we opted to do the same, thinking of students immigrating to the

United States with formal schooling in the Mexican educational system.

Overall, the team—translator, author, editors—feels confident that we struck the right balance between the need for a broadly readable Spanish text and our obligation to render the voices of Chicanas of the borderlands with as much verisimilitude as possible. In an epoch when the silencing of such voices has become a rallying cry of certain sectors of the US population, to do any less would be to become complicit in cultural erasure.

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A Mexican-American author and translator from South Texas, **DAVID BOWLES** teaches children’s and juvenile literature at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Recipient of awards from the American Library Association, Texas Institute of Letters, and Texas Associated Press, Bowles has written several books—including *Flower, Song, Dance: Aztec and Mayan Poetry* (2014 Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Best Translation), the Pura Belpré Honor Book *The Smoking Mirror*, and the forthcoming *Feathered Serpent, Dark Heart of Sky: Mexican Myths*. His work has appeared in multiple other venues, including *Journal of Children’s Literature*, *Asymptote*, *Translation Review*, *Metamorphoses*, *Rattle*, *Nightmare*, *Huizache*, and *Concho River Review*.

Welcome to the New Home Country Germany: Intercultural Projects of the International Youth Library with Refugee Children and Young Adults

Christiane Raabe



I. In the early days of September 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel made an historic decision: She brought in thousands of refugees to Germany by train who were stranded at the Central Station in Budapest under intolerable conditions and, in their desperation, had started heading north in long marches. The images of exhausted refugees, who were warmly welcomed at Munich Central Station, went around the globe. In the meantime, up to 13,000 more people were following daily; by the end of 2015, the number of refugees in Germany had reached almost one million. Most of them had fled from the wars in Syria, Somalia, and Iraq, but there were also people from Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco, the Balkan States, and other countries. Most refugees were young men or families. But according to estimates of government agencies, there were also thousands of unaccompanied minors, mostly from Afghanistan and Iraq. The refugees were housed in emergency accommodations, schools, gyms, city halls, tents, churches, or empty office buildings. Many of them were heavily traumatized, having lived through terrible experiences either in their home country or during the flight. Many theaters, orchestras, sport clubs, cultural foundations, and private initiatives stepped up to the huge challenge of integrating these people seeking protection in Germany with innovative, imaginative, and remarkable welcome initiatives and projects promoting integration. Libraries, in their vocation as open forums of democratic civic engagement were called upon to take a stand. For the International Youth Library, which has been promoting intercultural dialogue since its foundation, it was clear that this situation called for dedicated commitment to the cause.

II. Literacy and literature programs for children and young adults from migrant families have always played an important role in the work of the International Youth Library. This time, the task was much more challenging because the children and young people—who had fled from war, terror, and violence to Germany—were often severely traumatized and still had to learn the German language. This meant that concepts had to be developed to overcome language barriers and avoid retriggering trauma, especially since teachers of literature are not trained as

psychologists or therapists; nevertheless, they can open up new perspectives, enable encounters, and spread hope—all of which may have therapeutic effects. Storytelling with words and images can be a helpful tool to release internal pressure. It is possible to forget oneself in fictional adventures, hero's journeys, or superman stories, thus playfully overcoming feelings of helplessness. All forms of literary narratives potentially allow storytellers and listeners to escape from stressful everyday life, to virtually think through life designs, to articulate hopes and dreams, or simply to enjoy carefree childhood moments. We have experimented with this approach in writing, drama, and comic workshops, as well as in poetry slams. I will illustrate our work by presenting a summer school for refugee children and young adults, which we accomplished with financial support of the Binette Schroeder Foundation in 2016.

Under the title "What have you brought with you?" we invited young adults from refugee accommodations in Munich to the International Youth Library. Together with the New York-based artist, performer, theater director, and educator Kaneza Schaal and the New York illustrator and performance artist Chris Myers, they spent three weeks creating an experimental art, drama, and literature workshop. Drawing, painting, filming, or acting—the young people were encouraged to use a range of artistic expressions to tell and visualize stories with autobiographical grounding, thereby building bridges between home and exile or between past, present, and future. We asked the two established New York-based artists to lead this workshop because they had done several artistic projects with people from underprivileged or marginalized groups, bringing together rich and poor or black and white in their performances.

Thirty adolescents between the ages of twelve and eighteen took part in this project. Many of them were newcomers who had fled wars; some of them were stranded in Munich as unaccompanied minors. They hailed from Afghanistan, Armenia, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, and the Ukraine. Different questions served as cues for their creative work: What objects did you take along on your flight? What does a map of your flight look like? What does your home sound like? What stories and myths did you bring along? What would the flag of a country in which you would like to live look like? How do you envision your future? The young



people responded to these questions not only with pens and paints but also using a camera and developing narratives for which they created storyboards that resulted in shorts.

The refugee children drew maps of their flight, which often lasted several months—tracing their route from country to country, showing the means of transportation they used, and at times incidentally sharing traumatic encounters or losses. They designed fictional flags, showing their dreams and images of a new home. Other images served as inventories of the objects that the young refugees had taken along: a cell phone, a water bottle, and medication were always included.

Three Iraqi girls made a short film—a modern fairytale about three dancers who were supposed to be poisoned by a witch. A boy from Mali and a boy from Iraq invented a touching tale of friendship about two children who become friends and support one another despite different languages and cultural backgrounds. The young refugees created the props themselves and used costumes from Kaneza Schaal's collection. They also used the costumes to reflect on their self-image and their dreams by dressing up and posing alone or in groups in front of the camera. The results were impressive photos

that give deep insight into the emotional state of the children and young adults and also show their desires.

The medieval castle Blutenburg with its halls and courtyard, home of the International Youth Library, served as a picturesque backdrop and ideal "counter-location" to the often chaotic and overcrowded refugee accommodations. During the three weeks of the summer school, the refugee children and young adults formed the center of the Blutenburg castle, which is also a tourist attraction. Worlds that otherwise do not collide were brought together in this fairytale setting to stage successful integration. The castle offered the young refugees a safe space for artistic experiments and creative self-awareness, while also providing the framework for casual public encounters. In a sense, visitors of the castle could look over the shoulder of these people, who were mostly working in a tent in the courtyard, playing theatre, painting, or filming. The experience of using the castle as a stage for their creative self-encounters was very empowering for the young people. The visitors served

as their public, and the youngsters confidently interacted with them.

To conclude the project, all participants were invited together with their friends and families to a vernissage open to the public. The children, together with the two project leaders, prepared an exhibition of their artwork and photographs. The vernissage attracted a huge crowd, and visitors were touched to witness the strong bonds of solidarity that had developed among the young participants over the three weeks of the summer school.

For many children and young adults, the participation in the summer school proved an extremely enriching experience. Approaching their own story of flight and arrival and expressing their dreams and hopes through art allowed them to open up and to gain strength and confidence for positive self-awareness. They experienced the transformative power of creativity and intuitively recognized—perhaps for the first time—the importance of artistic/visual narratives for their own lives.

III.

Few activities unite humans more naturally than sharing stories. Everyone enjoys volunteering their favorite anecdote of a holiday gone wrong, or enlivening the conversation with a story about a whimsical prank from their school days. Stories are important bridging stones; they can bring people closer together, connect them, and help overcome

alienation. Building on this simple insight, we invited young adults living in refugee accommodations together with teenagers who had grown up in Germany to storytelling workshops. Unlike the summer school, only open to refugee children, this workshop focused on the encounter of newcomers and their more privileged peers. The following example will show how these projects were designed and how they worked.

In a two-day workshop entitled “Who are you?,” we brought together twelve teenagers between the ages of thirteen and fifteen at the International Youth Library. The focus was on writing and storytelling, on dialogue and exchange. It was about building bridges between six teenagers who had just arrived in Germany and six youngsters of the same age who were born in Germany or had been living there for a long time.

To begin, all participants were asked to write one of their favorite words in their mother tongue on an index card and deposit it in a word treasure box. Three cards were drawn and read out loud; then everyone was asked to share the associations triggered by these words. The meaning of the word and the language were irrelevant at this stage. Only the sound and visual appearance counted. This way the workshop opened with the discovery of the surprising variety of languages, scripts, and experiences coming together. The newcomers contributed Kurdish, Farsi, Albanian, Croatian, and Chinese, includ-



ing a language many people have never heard of—Tagalog, which is spoken in the Philippine Islands. But there were other surprises. One teenager could not decide whether she was German or French; another one came from a Ukrainian-Russian family.

Following this ice-breaker, writing and storytelling sessions alternated, and individual activities opened up to partner or group work. Inspired by personal possessions or family pictures, the participants wrote short poems about friendship and family. These writings were very personal—often heavy with longing, homesickness, and grief but also revealing what helped the young writers find solace: a stuffed animal, a photo from home, a book.

Writing, translating, and exchanging soon became second nature. Lively group conversations gave way to quiet periods of writing, and there was always time for intensive periods of partner work. Notebooks turned out to be a valuable tool: over the course of the workshop, they were filled with texts, sketches, and images and readily handed around during group discussions. Sarah wrote a translation into Reza’s notebook, and Sophie took notes for Antonio. Towards the end of the workshop, all teenagers were intoxicated by languages and scripts; pens and notebooks were circulated with great enthusiasm. One wanted her name painted in Chinese script, the other one in Kurdish, and someone else wanted to include a sentence in Albanian in her notebook. The text-image collages reflected the shared cultural diversity of the group. The different languages brought together the participants for two enriching days and released them back into their everyday lives with changed perspectives.

The workshop was led by two experienced writing coaches, who kept stimulating the discussions

and writings with cues or exercises and inspired the participants to express their autobiographical memories in stories, poems, or sketches. The fact that some of the texts will appear in the anthology *At Home in Two Languages*, published by the German Translator Fund, testifies to their quality.

IV.

The two projects presented here in more detail are typical examples of a series of concepts developed by the International Youth Library since 2015. They all aim at encouraging young refugees and those children and young adults who already have found a new home in Germany to tell their stories. On their way to Germany, many of them have lived through unspeakable hardship, which they need to process. As a library, we cannot offer professional therapy to these children and young adults, but we can help them document their personal stories in words and pictures and to open up new perspectives for a life worth living within German society. This succeeds when they are allowed to use a language that enables them to express their feelings, fears, hopes, longings, and dreams authentically. This may be their mother tongue—often the only part of home they could take along on their flight. But it can also be pictures, photos, or films. The verbal and visual means of expression create spaces that the young refugees need to articulate the complexity of their experiences. Creating these spaces has become one of the core missions for our education programs—it is our contribution to successful integration.

Translated by Nikola von Merveldt



CHRISTIANE RAABE is the director of the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany.

Books on Books

Compiled and edited by Jutta Reusch and Christiane Raabe



CHRISTIANE RAABE is the director and **JUTTA REUSCH** is the head of the library services of the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany.



SOUTH AFRICAN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN ENGLISH, 2000–2014.

By Sandra Stadler. Series: Studies in European Children's and Young Adult Literature; 4. Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017, 223 pages. ISBN: 978-3-8253-6641-4

South Africa celebrated its twentieth anniversary as a democracy in 2014. By discussing realistic young adult fiction written in South Africa during the early years of this new government, Sandra Stadler has in some ways also chronicled the issues the country experienced during its own coming of age. In this illuminating volume, the author provides close and distant readings on a wide selec-

tion of English-language titles. However, Stadler does not examine works by their contents alone but rather provides an analysis that considers pressing issues of race, gender, and class within a South African cultural context.

These analyses are divided into three main chapters, which also cover major themes often found in realistic young adult literature. Stadler first discusses the concept of space in South Africa, followed by a study of the representation of gender and sexual orientations, and lastly examines race and class as related to socioeconomic issues. These broader themes are divided into more specific sub-chapters that focus on particular concerns. For example, the chap-

ter on gender includes sections on masculinity, homo- and transsexuality, and young women. Each chapter contains analyses of texts related to the issues discussed, and while the author employs literary criticism in her writing, she also astutely interweaves prominent theories from other fields such as psychology and sociology.

Although each chapter is fascinating in its analysis of important topics in realistic South African young adult literature, Stadler's discussion of space is particularly interesting as this subject encompasses many other themes as related to the previously apartheid-segregated country. The spaces depicted in the fictional books back research that shows how many of these divides still exist because of the inequitable ways neighborhoods were originally built and racially split, and how these physical and social spaces have extensive economic and cultural implications. Throughout the book, Stadler does not shy away from discussing head on the issues that South Africa still faces today.

Stadler's work helps to fill a gap as scholars have not extensively written on South African youth literature post-apartheid. Also, much of South African young adult literature has not emerged onto the international scene—with some notable exceptions, such as *Spud* by John van de Ruit—and so this study provides not only analysis but also excellent descriptions of some heretofore lesser-known works. Anyone with a keen interest in realistic young adult literature or current issues in South Africa could find much in this book engaging. Stadler maintains an accessible writing style even when introducing complex concepts.

The volume concludes with a look to the future of young adult literature in South Africa, both in themes as well as the ways in which young people will read. Stadler includes an extensive Works Cited section and an appendix with an annotated corpus of South African young adult literature from an array of genres published during the first part of the millennium.

Michelle Bourgeois
International Youth Library



VÁLEČNÉ DĚTSTVÍ A MLÁDÍ (1939–1945) V LITERATUŘE A PUBLICISTICE.

[Childhood in Times of War (1939–1945) in Literature and Journalism]. Edited by Jana Čeňková. Univerzita Karlova, nakladatelství Karolinum, 2016, 235 pages. ISBN: 978-80-246-3413-5

In many countries and cultures around the world, World War II and the Holocaust are important literary topics in literature for children and young adults. The stories and narratives about the war often center on a child or adolescent protagonist and look at the lives of children in times of war. The volume, edited by Jana Čeňková (Charles University, Prague), sheds light on childhoods in times of war in Czech children's literature and journalism. It also includes German-language (and some Dutch and Slovak) works, which necessarily played a role between 1939 and 1945 because of the German occupation of what was then Czechoslovakia.

The introductory chapters by Milena Šubrtová, Pavel Suk, and Jan Halada trace the measures of the National Socialist education policies and their impact on the Czech publishing industry. The Board of Trustees for the Education of Youth, created by the National Socialists, was the most influential institution in this respect. It stood behind a Czech version of the young adult series War, Adventure, and Colonial Youth Library of the Berlin publisher Stein-

iger, published in Prague by Orbis beginning in 1939. The board also encouraged the publication of new magazines that promoted the image of virtuous, patriotic boys and girls true to National Socialist ideology. These magazines adapted formats and special columns from popular Czech youth magazines, such as the idea of a book club. Suk's contribution shows how the National Socialist ideology, most apparent in racist and anti-Semitic content, already exerted its influence before the German occupation—such as in the case of the magazine *Mladý Hlasatel*, founded in 1935, which printed posters of the Hitler Youth or Nazi interpretations of historical events prior to 1939.

Ester Nováková, Luisa Nováková, Jaroslav Toman, and Jana Čeňková examine how Czech children's literature responded to the German occupation and World War II by analyzing individual works and their aesthetics. Adopting similar strategies as adult fiction, children's books published during the occupation tend to set their stories in the past or to anchor them in local traditions. They return to key historical events of Czech history and celebrate the importance of local and regional identities for the country, only obliquely commenting the current occupation by a foreign military force.

The early post-war years see the emergence of a long series of children's books that remember life during the war most often from the perspective of child and adolescent protagonists. This raises the question of the intended audience and, hence, the question of what to tell about the horrors of the war, and how. It becomes apparent that many children's books focus on extraordinary situations during the war, such as resistance to the National Socialists or the survival of a Czech woman in a German town. Many also recount traumatic experiences of child protagonists who denounce the actions of the adults.

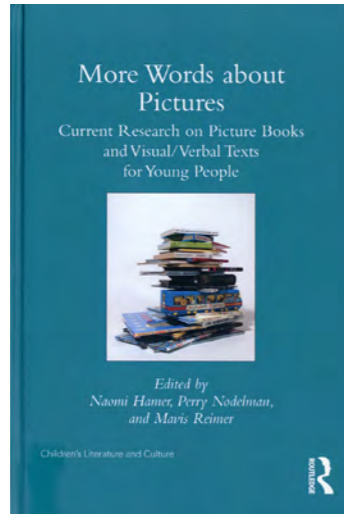
A few essays explore the authorship of literary representations of childhood in times of war. Tamara Bučková shows how authors of German-language books draw on personal memories and use literary devices to give them shape, or they

base their literary storytelling on true events experienced by others. Radek Malý and Jarmila Sulovská present a number of impressive war diaries and childhood memoirs originally not intended for child readers or publication but now published for young readers as relevant, authentic testimonies.

Most contributions observe that the Holocaust and World War II are imperative topics of contemporary children's literature. The Slovak children's magazine *Slniečko*, analyzed by Zuzana Stanislavová, seems to be an exception—for World War II is no longer touched upon after 1990. Many contributors ask whether and how successfully the memories of the war and the Holocaust described in the works of fiction and diaries will be passed on to the next generation. The course outlines and lists of children's books on the war and the Holocaust, as well as the essay on school textbooks by Petra Bubeníčková, Milan Polák, and Jitka Zítková will help contribute to keeping the memory alive.

Katja Wiebe

International Youth Library
Translated by Nikola von Merveldt



MORE WORDS ABOUT PICTURES: Current Research on Picture Books and Visual/Verbal Texts for Young People.

Edited by Naomi Hamer, Perry Nodelman, and Mavis Reimer. Series: Children's Literature and Culture; 111. Routledge, 2017, 223 pages. ISBN: 978-1-138-65664-2

This edited volume addresses topics discussed at a picturebook conference that took place at the University of Winnipeg in 2013. It aims to revisit and further Perry Nodelman's *Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*, which was originally published in 1988. Since then, picturebooks have undergone a rapid transformation, so this volume presents cutting-edge picturebook studies that cover a rich array of issues while making connections to the landmark work of Nodelman. The volume combines three thematic strands: first, the origination of meaning in picturebooks; second, the use of diverse media to transmit the narrative; and third, the material conditions of picturebooks that can at times lead to performative readings. In the preface, editors Naomi Hamer and Mavis Reimer underline the importance of cross-disciplinary theoretical inquiries, which have their foundations in Nodelman's previous work.

In his introduction, Nodelman recounts how he came to write *Words about Pictures* and how in

time his views evolved and spread to help create a new awareness. He acknowledges his debts to newer picturebook scholarship, giving snapshots of promising lines of enquiry not addressed in his first book. Lian Beveridge's original essay extends the scope of literary appreciation by exploring babies' chewing and biting of books as a form of reading, a literary and bodily engagement with their favorite books. The chapter by William Moebius compares visiting a museum to reading a picturebook by juxtaposing the relational aspects of the two. Much like museums, picturebooks allow their readers to closely examine their content—facilitating not only physical closeness but also an intimate exploration of the narrative in a number of ways, calling to mind Buzz Spector's *Book Maker's Desire: Writing on the Arts of the Book* (1995). The spatial interaction with the picturebook may trigger a performative presence of the reader, blurring the line between the medium of the painting and the picturebook. Erica Hateley's essay discusses intertextuality in Shaun Tan's picturebook *The Lost Thing*. She notes that the paintings alluded to reflect changing ways of being, from individualism in the earlier paintings to social interaction in the later ones, pointing the protagonist towards a happier way of being.

Naomi Hamer studies the production of picturebooks for mobile and interactive platforms by comparing discourses between print picturebooks and digital picturebook apps. Hamer draws our attention to the shared properties of both formats as they foster participatory and collaborative reading, but she notes that adapting printed picturebooks into picturebook apps may not be as simple as imagined, considering that the new media cultures solicit their own design approach and theory for an optimal outcome. Helene Høystrup points to new frontiers in textuality as she studies children's encounters with new media and how traditional books and reading practices are being dismantled, stressing the need to revisit theories involving materiality and semiotics. Høystrup sketches emerging literary systems and their novel approach to delivering text to

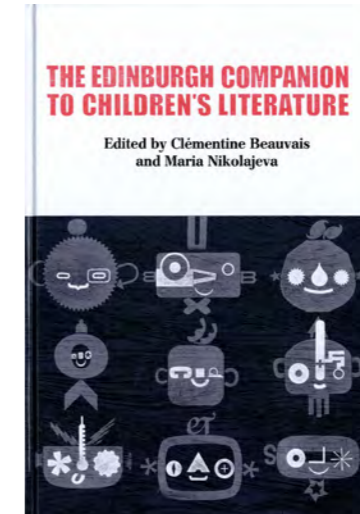
children, at times inviting them to become co-creators.

"Performing Picture Books as Co-Authorship" explores the role picturebooks play in the enactment of a text, either physically or in the imagination, and its impact on a child. This essay studies the significance of the often overlooked role of performativity or mediation that is necessary to be able to fully absorb the picturebook narrative. "Environmental Picture Books: Cultivating Conservationists" studies how environmental consciousness is represented in picturebooks for today's children. It uses the tools of ecocriticism to question whether these books sufficiently encourage respect and responsibility for nature by taking a critical stand especially on environmental issues. The following essays also cover a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from the results of a case study on the presentation of faith in picturebooks or a picturebook enriched by comics to the multidimensional aspects of picturebook space as well as to appropriation and copyright issues.

In conclusion, this edited volume not only makes a leap in time to reflect on the changes that have occurred since *Words about Pictures* was published but also touches on current debates that concentrate on emerging scholarly questions and approaches that may be further developed in the future. It maps the current state of picturebook research, suggesting promising avenues and foreshadowing structural, material, and narrative shifts in the changing world of the picturebook. This work, informative in so many ways, also encourages a cross-pollination of disciplines to develop a better understanding of the evolution of picturebooks.

Ilgim Veryeri Alaca

Department of Media and Visual Arts
Koç University Istanbul



THE EDINBURGH COMPANION TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE.

Edited by Clémentine Beauvais and Maria Nikolajeva. Series: Edinburgh Companions to Literature and the Humanities. Edinburgh University Press, 2017, 376 pages. ISBN 978-1-474-41463-0

Companions are needed both in life and literature. Old companions do not need to be rejected because new ones appear. New companions are not necessarily better than old ones, but they may be different and hence able to offer new perspectives, guide through unexplored fields, and confront or challenge with their surprising queries. This also applies to *The Edinburgh Companion to Children's Literature*, compiled and edited by Clémentine Beauvais and Maria Nikolajeva. The two editors have gathered together a team of twenty-four skilled researchers, including themselves. Even though most of them are affiliated with Anglo-American institutions, they still cover a wide range of topics. *The Companion* is structured in three parts. The first part contains eleven chapters dealing with contemporary directions in children's literature scholarship. Amongst these, there are several related to the larger field of ecocriticism, such as the chapters on posthumanism (Flanagan), animal studies (Jaques), feminist ecocriticism (Curry), and spatiality (Carroll). The large number of chapters concerned

with environmental and ecocritical issues is indicative of overall changes within the field of children's literature research. In comparison, *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature* (2009) contains only one chapter on animal and object stories and one on fantasy's alternative geography. It seems that in 2009 these two chapters were samples of "what comes next?"

The second part offers eight chapters on contemporary trends in children's and young adult literature, covering themes of great current interest, such as seriality (Kümmerling-Meibauer), translation (Lathey), and picturebooks in foreign language learning contexts (Mourão). It also covers chapters on what may be the most difficult field to circumscribe, namely digital or multimodal children's literature. More (technically) descriptive than literary explorative, these chapters may prove to be difficult for inexperienced students. Perhaps the field itself has grown too vast and disparate to be covered within a few chapters.

The editors, Beauvais and Nikolajeva, state that their companion first of all seeks to "capture the most recent trends and phenomena in children's and young adult literature itself as well as international research; to anticipate the possible new avenues that research can take" (5). While the current trends and phenomena are considered in the first two parts, new avenues are explored in the third and final part, called "Unmapped Territories." Among the contributors to this part are, in addition to the editors themselves, three scholars who also authored other chapters in the volume (Kokkola, Joosen, and Flanagan). The nine chapters that constitute this part are generally shorter and more suggestive than the other chapters. The topics covered range from distant reading to evolutionary criticism and genetic studies. Regardless of the compelling labels, some of the proposed territories turn out to be less unmapped than one might initially think.

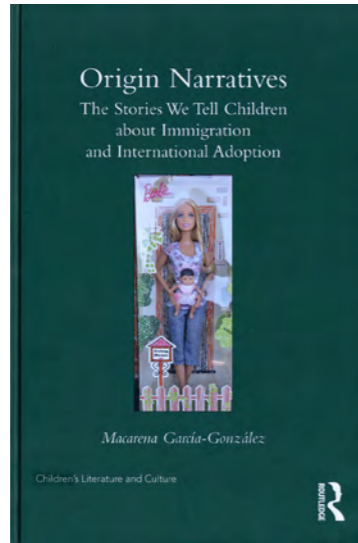
Several chapters in the volume could be put forward as outstanding examples of academic thinking and writing; Vanessa Joosen's chapter on age studies in children's literature

is a case in point. Its purpose is “to explore how any age influences the human body, mind and behavior and how relationships between generations are shaped” (79). Joosen clearly states the focus of the chapter, maps the theoretical framework, and provides the readers with an instructive close reading of a selected children’s book. Finally, the author calls upon other scholars to pay attention to age in children’s literature: “children’s literature studies needs to draw more on age studies to address the construction of age for young readers if it does not want to reproduce age-related prejudice naively” (88).

It has been a true delight for the reviewer to discover *The Edinburgh Companion to Children’s Literature* to be an up-to-date, wide-ranging, and future-oriented companion that can be recommended to a broad audience. It is an inspiring encouragement to map new territories of children’s literature or to carefully reconsider and nuance those already sketched.

Nina Goga

Western Norway University of Applied Sciences



ORIGIN NARRATIVES: The Stories We Tell Children about Immigration and International Adoption.

By Macarena García-González.
Series : Children’s Literature and Culture; 122. Routledge, 2017, 190 pages.
ISBN: 978-0-415-78548-8

In *Origin Narratives*, Macarena García-González analyzes the narratives of race and ethnicity in sixty works for children published in Spain. Her corpus comprises picturebooks and novels for readers under the age of eleven on the topic of international adoption and immigration. All works are recommended by the Servicio de Orientación a la Lectura Infantil y Juvenil (S.O.L., Children’s and Youth Readership Orientation Service), the main authority in Spain making reading recommendations. García-González’s interdisciplinary monograph, drawing on sociology and literary studies, is based on field work that she did at the S.O.L. in order to understand the selection and labelling criteria. The analysis of her interviews with the mediators of the S.O.L. as well as of the reviews themselves is revealing because it sheds light on possible problems the works may encounter in the reception process. But the author goes beyond this sociological approach to present thorough literary and iconographic analyses of the selected works. Given that some studies on similar topics

tend to simply identify and denounce negative stereotypes, this attention to the aesthetic dimension is commendable.

The volume is divided into seven chapters. In the first two, García-González presents the research question and methodology as well as the result of her field work at the S.O.L. She advances the hypothesis that the apparent consensus on what qualifies as a “good book for young readers” prevents reviewers from recognizing the subjectivity of their judgement, necessarily influenced by their socio-cultural norms. This hypothesis is not further developed but certainly intriguing for those thinking about children’s literature and interculturality. The next two chapters, titled “I came by plane” and “They came through the desert” respectively, focus on children’s literature on international adoption and immigration. Both follow the same structure, beginning with an explanation of the geopolitical context of adoption or immigration in Spain. García-González thus situates the children’s books within the larger social discourse, implying that the questions she poses are equally valid for discourses other than children’s literature. She then goes on to analyze recurrent narratives and tropes in both categories of children’s books. She concludes the chapters by a narratological analysis of selected works, paying special attention to modes of focalization. In the next two chapters, García-González examines the works’ discourse on race and racism, exposing how it is intertwined with the discourses on gender and class. In the concluding chapter, she looks at the narrative of the family as that of the nation.

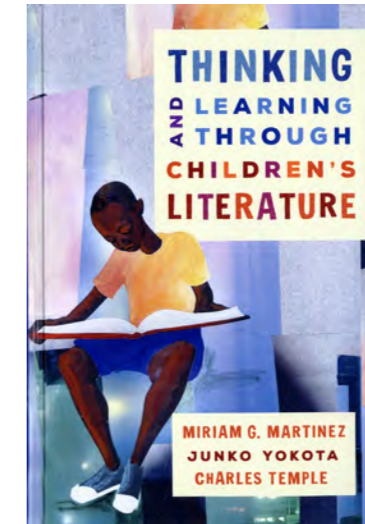
Since three-quarters of the works in the corpus are picturebooks, more analysis of the iconographic narratives would have been desirable, especially in the first half of the study; however, this does not diminish the overall merit. The conclusions García-González draws from her detailed analyses prove relevant beyond the realm of children’s literature. When she observes, for example, that the happy ending in many books on immigration is brought about by the self-exoticization of child immi-

grants who perform their supposed difference to be accepted; when she notes that some authors, wishing to validate the child’s origins, reduce the young protagonist to his or her cultural roots; or when she uncovers the paradoxes of books that claim to celebrate diversity while advocating a certain colorblindness. In all these instances, she also denounces the contradictions governing the everyday behavior of many well-meaning people when faced with strangers. While she does not always provide tools to avoid these contradictions, she does prepare the ground for a much-needed reflection on narratives of the “Other” in pro-diversity texts for children.

The eclecticism of the critical works cited—ranging from cultural studies, sociology, and critical race theory to narratology, image studies, and children’s literature scholarship—testifies to the impressive scope of this study. One may merely regret that, apart from a brief explanation of the terms in the introduction, the core concepts of “race” and “ethnicity” are not further explored. Nevertheless, with her keen and highly readable analysis of a topic still too often avoided, García-González offers us a timely book on a pressing topic—which allows readers to critically reflect on children’s literature at the same time as on the societies producing it.

Élodie Malanda

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle
Translated by Nikola von Merveldt



THINKING AND LEARNING THROUGH CHILDREN’S LITERATURE.

By Miriam G. Martinez, Junko Yokota, and Charles Temple. Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, 213 pages.
ISBN: 978-1-4758-2150-5

Reading is not only a pleasurable aesthetic experience but can also make an important contribution to the development of children’s personalities and their civic engagement. Based on this insight, this book offers a thorough, user-friendly companion to literacy/reading promotion for children and young adults. It presents a thoughtful combination of theoretical foundations and didactic practices by using examples of literature to illustrate how young readers can engage with literature in its different genres and media, taking into account their developmental stage and providing meaningful connections to their personal experiences. The book is divided into five sections. The first chapter, “Children and Reading,” gives ideas for reading promotion. Based on empirical research on children’s reading behavior and meaning making, the authors describe different methods of how to develop the reception, reading comprehension, and analysis of literary texts.

The second chapter, “How Literature Works,” provides a didactic perspective on introducing basic concepts of narratology—such as

setting, plot, character, theme, or style—as well as subgenres of fiction, including contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, and fantasy. Using the picturebook “Freedom in Congo Square” with poetry by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrations by Gregory Christie as an example, the authors analyze how the text, image, and paratexts interact to create complex storytelling. They give ideas on how to use the book in class and provide reference material with many links to websites with further resources.

The third chapter, “Inviting Children into Literature,” proposes methods for the promotion of literature-rich classrooms—such as an inspiring presentation of books in the classroom library, making books easily accessible through communal reading, read-aloud programs, and discussions of new books—by providing audiobooks, e-books or related video games on tablets, or by having children write reading-logs or book reviews. The authors also discuss the possible contribution of multimedia storytelling and the oral storytelling tradition to reading promotion. Chapter Four, “Let’s Talk about Literature,” features a toolkit equipping educators with a wide range of didactic options to promote the discussion of literary texts in the classroom: using formal or thematic approaches, building on identification and empathy, exploring description or the creative continuation of a suspended plot, close reading, or dramatizing a story. Poetry and non-fiction are also addressed.

The final chapter, “Literary and Content Units,” provides templates for planning, organizing, and realizing literature units based on the different methods, including the use of technology, both in literature classes and across the curriculum.

A glance at the detailed table of contents will convince readers of the user-friendly structure of this book. The five main chapters are each subdivided into three parts. Short paragraphs enhance the readability and orientation even further. The layout, including text boxes, illustrations, or diagrams of current theoretical models make information highly accessible; headings such as “Don’t

miss” highlight notable books; “Try this,” “Technology Tip,” or “Want to know more” readily identify ideas for hands-on reading activities. “What do you think?” and “What do experts say” propose discussion points or professional opinions. Each chapter concludes with a useful annotated list of recommended books with plot summaries as well as further reading under the headings “References”

and “Resources.” An index at the end of the book guides readers towards important names, titles, and key terms used in the book.

The authors practice what they preach—they present their topic in engaging and memorable ways. This is the secret to their success: They inspire the intended readers of this book—educators working in reading promotion—and equip them with

the necessary enthusiasm and tools not only to teach reading but also to encourage children and young adults to share the joy of reading and to become passionate readers of their own.

Jutta Reusch
International Youth Library
Translated by Nikola von Merveldt

These illustrated bilingual board books are the first series from Reo Pepi and are written for parents wanting to bring Te Reo Māori (the indigenous language of New Zealand) into their home. The author and illustrator cousins found themselves needing resources to connect their young children with their heritage language, and also to learn Te Reo Māori themselves.

The text for each book uses repetitive phrases caregivers say with young children: “Kei hea tō ihu? Where is your nose?” (in Kākahu) and “Whakamaua ō tōkena. Put on your socks” (in Kākahu). In Kararehe, the phrases follow this pattern: “He kuri tēnei. This is a dog.” Because each phrase is repeated eight times per book with different nouns inserted, both reader and listener will leave with the phrase firmly embedded for real world use. Each phrase is presented first in larger Māori text and underneath in smaller English text, with a pronunciation guide at the end of the book.

These are well-made board books with durable and chewable construction, including rounded edges. The stunning pencil and watercolor illustrations fill each page with beautiful big faces and animals who stare directly into your eyes, with eye contact being fundamental in communication.

Nicola Daly

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS



Kararehe: Animals
Kānohi: My face
Kākahu: Getting Dressed
Kitty Brown
Illus. Kirsten Parkinson
Dunedin, New Zealand: Reo Pepi
Tapui, 2015. 18 pp.
ISBN: 9780473331511 (Kararehe);
9780473331504 (Kānohi);
9780473331528 (Kākahu)
(Picturebooks; ages 0–2 and all
early language learners)

The striking cover, showing a young boy in blue superhero stockings and mask leaping upwards towards a fiery yellow sun, indicates that readers are in for a contemporary rendition of a myth well-known to most New Zealanders. Māui is a demigod in traditional Polynesian mythology who, among many other feats, ties ropes around the sun to slow it down and lengthen the day.

However, this story—in bilingual text (Māori and English) and brilliant cartoon-like illustrations—shows Māui, his mother, and his brothers in a contemporary dark industrial world. Adding to the appeal of this little superhero is that he speaks in rhyme, both in English and Māori, as he tries to convince his brothers to help him in his endeavors: “‘Taha,’ he said, ‘I know you have dreams, I know you have hopes. Let’s work together. Let’s make some ropes.’” Complementing the contemporary feel of the illustrations are the brothers’ colloquialisms: “‘What are you talking about, bro?’ Taha frowned, ‘We don’t have enough sunscreen for that. That sun will burn our butts.’”

This beautifully produced hardcover picture book is worthy of its inclusion in the 2017 Storylines New Zealand Children’s Literature Trust Notable Book list.

Nicola Daly

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS



Māui—Sun Catcher
Tim Tipene
Illus. Zak Waipara
Trans. Rob Ruha
Auckland, New Zealand: Oratia
Books, 2016. Unpaged.
ISBN: 9780947506148
(Picturebook; ages 2–8)

Each section of this board book for young children describes two different forest animals and then asks readers if they know which they are, before giving the answer on the next page: from the giant hoopoe, a flightless bird with bright yellow plumage endemic to the island of Saint Helena, to the Tasmanian wolf and the Pinta Island tortoise, which can be almost as tall as a pony. Of course, most children (and adults) have probably never heard about any of these creatures, which sets the stage for the last page of the book, where it is revealed that these are all extinct species, delivering a powerful message of conservation.

Despite the theme’s seriousness, the book presents it in a way that is both accessible and engaging for young readers. The simple question and answer format encourages the audience to keep guessing and learning about these animals. Moreno’s incredibly detailed illustrations—made with a combination of color pencils and scratched-on textures that give the book a distinct tactile and realistic look—invites viewers to marvel at the creatures’ beauty and lament their untimely extinction, encouraging us to protect other endangered species.

Andrés Montañés-Lleras

BOOKBIRD POSTCARDS



**¿Sabes cuáles son?
(Do you know which they are?)**
J. R. Moreno
Bogotá, Colombia: El Salmón
Editores, 2017. 12 pp.
ISBN: 9789585900745
(Picturebook; ages 4+)

By Liz Page



LIZ PAGE is Executive Director of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY)

Momentous Occasions at the 2018 Bologna Children's Book Fair

Every “even” year, IBBY proudly announces the winners of the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award and the Hans Christian Andersen Award—2018 was no exception. The announcement has attracted a larger audience over the years, especially since IBBY has made the announcement in the central area of the fair at the Illustrators Café. Every year the IBBY activities at the book fair start before the fair opens with two days of intense Executive Committee meetings, where IBBY’s business and projects are discussed. The first day of the fair was on Monday, March 26, and the IBBY press conference was held on that afternoon. The conference was live-streamed so all IBBY members and friends around the world could watch the event. The link is still valid if you missed it the first time:

<https://goo.gl/iwWMEg>.

President Wally De Doncker opened the press conference by speaking of the problems facing the world in general.

As IBBY members, we are very concerned about new developments worldwide. Walls are being built again; people are once again being targeted because of their origin, religion, or conviction. International collaboration—be it on climate change, trade, or immigration—is being questioned. People are being manipulated into believing that closing borders will solve the problems they are facing, although everyone present here today knows that this could not be further from the truth.



The opening of the IBBY Press Conference 2018. Photo: Junko Yokota.

He ended his welcome by thanking all IBBY members with these words:

You are making a difference for future generations. Those who help children to evolve into readers are building a brighter future.

A slide show of IBBY’s current activities from the past was then shown, presenting the scope and variety of the work that IBBY members are undertaking to bring children and books together. The image for the 2018 International Children’s Book Day was presented, and members of Latvian IBBY distributed copies of the poster at the conference. Valerie Coghlan, the President of Bookbird Inc., presented the journal and introduced the incoming editors. Janelle Mathis and Petros Panaou will start their tenure after current editor Björn Sundmark steps down at the end of 2018. Vassiliki Nika, the chair of the 36th IBBY Congress organizing committee, presented the forthcoming Congress in Athens, Greece, and gave many good reasons why everyone should register and participate in the Congress. The audience responded very enthusiastically.

Next came the first of the big news announce-

ments—the 2018 winner of the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award. Chair of the 2018 jury, Sunjid-maa Jamba, presented the nominees, thanked the sponsor (the Asahi Shimbun newspaper company from Japan), and made the long-awaited announcement that *Les Doigts Qui Rêvent* from France were the recipients of the 2018 Award.

Patricia Aldana, the chair of the Hans Christian Andersen Award, held the attention of the audience as she introduced the 2018 Award. It was very rewarding to see the Award sponsors from Nami Island Inc. in the audience. Several members of the 2018 Jury were also in the audience, and they were congratulated; they were Andrej Ilc (Slovenia), Reina Duarte (Spain), Shereen Kreidieh (Lebanon), Yasuko Doi (Japan), Denis Beznosov (Russia), and Junko Yokota (USA). The nominees on the shortlist were also congratulated; of these, Farhad Hassanzadeh (Iran), Igor Oleynikov (Russia), and Xiong Liang (China) were present. Then the big moment arrived, and Patricia announced that Eiko Kadono from Japan was the recipient of the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Author Award, and that Igor Oleynikov from Russia was the recipient of the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Illustrator Award.

The audience was very appreciative, and Igor could not believe it!

The Chief of the Rome Bureau of the Asahi Shimbun, Shinichi Kawarada, had travelled to Bologna to be present at the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award announcement. He was very pleased to be there as he had two stories to report on from one press conference—the 2018 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award and a Japanese Andersen winner!

All three winners will be present at the IBBY Congress in Athens to receive their awards. A reception was offered at the IBBY stand immediately after the press conference, and many friends and members of IBBY attended.

Another important event at the book fair was the joint signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between IBBY, IFLA, and ILA. The Memorandum was originally signed in 2005 and has been updated to reflect the changes since then.

The signing took place on Wednesday, March 28, at the press center of the fair. Present were Wally De Doncker (IBBY), Ingrid Bon (IFLA, International Federation of Library Associations), and Bernadette Dwyer (ILA, International Literacy Association). The new memorandum was initiated by Bill Teale, former president of ILA, who sadly passed away before the memorandum was signed; he was warmly remembered at the ceremony. Each signatory organization issued a quote to accompany the event:

All our members approve the introduction of a formal commitment to the principles of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). It is our responsibility to uphold these rights, as they reflect to seek, receive, and impart information and to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy.

(Wally de Doncker, President, IBBY)

Universal literacy remains one of the great challenges of our time. Truly sustainable, bottom-up development depends on everyone having the ability to read and engage with information. In signing this memorandum with IBBY and ILA, I look forward to continuing a partnership that is making a real difference for people and communities around the world.

(Gerald Leitner, Secretary General, IFLA)

ILA views literacy as a fundamental, inalienable human right. This Memorandum reaffirms our collective commitment to our shared goal of literacy for all. We look forward to strengthening the partnership between our organizations.

(Douglas Fisher, President of the ILA Board of Directors)

During the rest of the fair, other formal meetings took place—such as the European regional meeting, the IBBY Foundation Board meeting, and the meet-

ing of the Sharjah/IBBY Fund for Children in Crisis Advisory Board. There were also smaller informal meetings between IBBY and other organizations, including with the ALMA, IPA, and The Hive. A brilliant extra event was a storytelling afternoon with Pat Ryan. The afternoon was organized in association with IBBY Ireland and had the theme “Connecting—how Ireland brings children and books together.” The talk/interview with storyteller, writer, teacher, and academic Pat Ryan took place in conversation with IBBY Ireland President, Jane O’Hanlon, at the IBBY stand.

Meanwhile, visitors to the IBBY stand were impressed by the presentations of the Andersen awards, the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award, *Bookbird*, and the forthcoming Congress in Athens. Many thanks to Luzmaria Stauffenegger and Susan Dewhirst from the IBBY Secretariat for managing the smooth running of the IBBY 2018 stand.

All news and information about IBBY and the Awards can be found on the IBBY website: www.ibby.org



Patricia Aldana announcing the winners of the 2018 HCA Award. Photo: Denis Beznosov



3. IBBY Stand 2018. Photo: Denis Beznosov



After signing the MofU, Bologna 2018. Left to right: Bernadette Dwyer (ILA), Wally De Doncker (IBBY), and Ingrid Bon (IFLA). Photo: Junko Yokota.



Irina Tokmakova (March 3, 1929–April 5, 2018)

It was with great sorrow that we learned of the passing of Irina Petrovna Tokmakova at the age of ninety. An incredible woman, she was a talented Soviet and Russian writer of children's books; an author of educational stories, poems, and plays for children; a translator of British and Swedish folk poetry; a bright public figure; and an active member of the Executive Board of IBBY Russia.

Since the very foundation of the Russian Section of IBBY, formerly the USSR Section, Irina Tokmakova had taken part in all its meetings, projects, and contests. She was always highly professional when representing the rich heritage of Russian children's books at numerous international congresses, meetings, and seminars.

Her connection to international IBBY has been strong over the years. In 1982, she was awarded an IBBY Honour List Diploma for her translation of the Armenian book *Nstish ev agangd ara* (Sit down and listen) by Silva Kapustikjan (Detskaya Literatura, 1980). She was a member of the Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury for the 1980, 1982, and 1990 awards and served on the IBBY Executive Committee from 1990 to 1992.

IBBY Russia especially enjoyed the opportunity to work and to be friends with such an acclaimed author of classic Russian children's literature. Irina Petrovna Tokmakova's devotion to her readers will stay with us always.

Angela Lebedeva

Themed Issue: Negotiating Agency, Voice and Identity through Literature

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature seeks contributions for a themed issue on agency, voice and identity. In a fast-changing world, where power is becoming more and more oppressive and undemocratic, agency, voice and identity are the very life elements that can sustain us. Our sense of agency—our ability to assert our identity, exert our voice and make a difference in the world—is closely related to our drive to live, act and hope. Citizens who contribute to, and receive from, their local and global communities, strive to have a voice in issues that matter and to be part of decision-making processes that are of importance. Such empowerment comes from developing a strong sense of identity.

Borrowing from Moje and Lewis' definition of agency (2007), we perceive people with agency as being empowered to make their identity, ideals, perceptions, and beliefs visible and actively tapped to enhance personal, cultural, and social aspects of their life experiences. One important way in which people do this, is by sharing their stories. Experiencing acts of agency through reading offers powerful ways to learn about other members of our local and global communities as well as consider the potential for our own agency. When it comes to conceptions of child agency, we espouse Marah Gubar's "kinship model" (2016). Instead of regarding adults' agency as the norm and then thinking of how children's agency is different or lacking, the kinship model starts with the assumption that all people, young and old, are akin in their never-ending negotiations of agency and power.

We seek manuscripts that address the notion of agency as perceived and nurtured across various countries and cultures, both within literature and through the sharing of literature. In doing so, we invite a broad spectrum of possible connections through themes that address: (1) Personal agency, a strong sense of self and the potential of one's own voice and actions; (2) Social agency, taking a stand for and/or with friends and community members; or (3) Cultural agency, speaking up and taking action in support of one's culture (Mathis, 2016). The following subthemes are offered as suggestions in addition to ones you may have in mind:

- Critical questioning of children's and young adult literature, in terms of who and to what extent has a voice and is able to exert agency
- Finding voice and identity in and through poetry, biographical texts, historical fiction, science fiction, or other genres
- Literary demonstrations of children having a strong voice and/or taking a stand in social issues
- Examples of sharing books with readers that promote a strong sense of identity, agency and voice and/or engaging young readers in critical discussions around such issues
- Analysis of textual and visual representations of young characters who negotiate their gender, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, or racial identities
- LGBTQ characters' voice, agency and identity in children's and young adult literature
- Children developing identity through interpretive and imaginative play and interactions around literature
- Children as problem detectors and problem solvers in books, and/or children being inspired by literature to address problems
- The power of story in light of developing identity, voice and agency
- Conflicts within literary works that focus on voice and identity
- Focus on a particular author or illustrator in revealing books that build identity and agency
- "Voice" as an author's craft and its relation to identity and agency
- Comparative approaches to agency, voice and identity across literary works from different cultures
- Translation, transfer and reception issues that pertain to agency, voice and identity
- Controversial, challenged or banned texts in relation to agency, voice and identity

Full papers should be submitted to the editors, Petros Panaou (ppanaou@uga.edu) and Janelle Mathis (janelle.mathis@unt.edu) by August 1, 2018. Bookbird submission guidelines can be found at www.ibby.org/bookbird.

Open Call for Issue 57.2 (April 2019)

Bookbird is inviting submissions for the open-themed April 2019 issue. Full papers should be submitted to the editors, Petros Panaou (ppanaou@uga.edu) and Janelle Mathis (janelle.mathis@unt.edu) by October 1, 2018. For further information, please visit the Bookbird website at <http://www.ibby.org/bookbird>.

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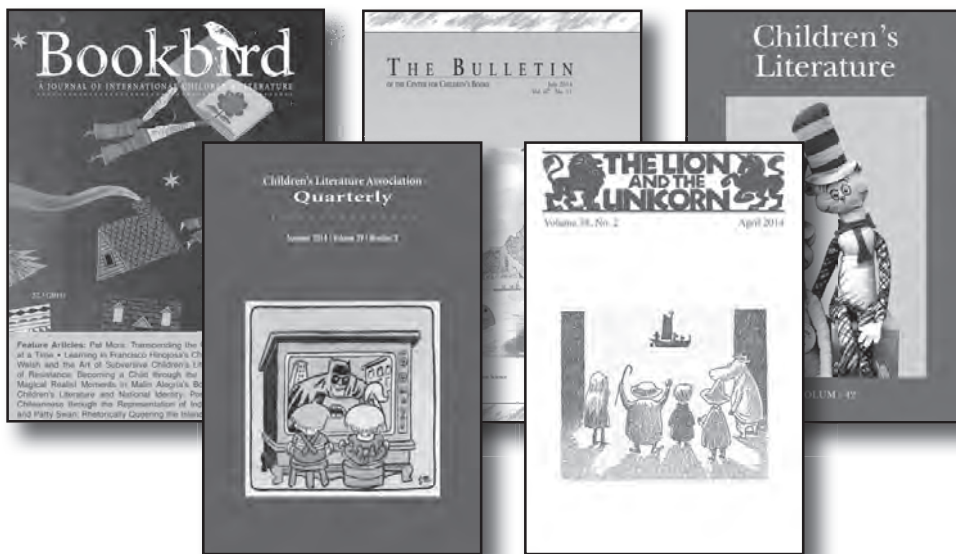
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