

Bookbird



A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



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INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE **iBBY**

NEGOTIATING AGENCY, VOICE, AND IDENTITY THROUGH LITERATURE.

Featured Articles: Deborah Ellis's IBBY 2018 Keynote Speech • Reading Radiantly: Embracing the Power of Picturebooks to Cultivate the Social Imagination • "A Girl Like Me in a Time Gone By": Agency, Reading, and Writing in the *Our Australian Girl* Series • When Child Is the Father of Man: Contesting Meanings of Childhood and Adulthood in the Fairy Tale Collections of Colonial Bengal

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

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Negotiating Agency, Voice, and Identity Through Literature

by PETROS PANAOU & JANELLE MATHIS



Petros Panaou is a clinical associate professor at the University of Georgia, Department of Language and Literacy Education, where he teaches children's literature and literacy courses. He chairs the annual Georgia Conference on Children's Literature and has also chaired the academic committee for the 36th IBBY Congress. Petros currently serves on the Newbery Awards committee and has served on USBBY's Outstanding International Books committee. He has authored a book and several articles and book chapters on international children's literature. He has translated two academic volumes and led multiple international grants. His unpublished novel for children and teens *To Kinito* [*The Cellphone*] was awarded a CYBBY honor in 2017.

As incoming *Bookbird* editors, we are deeply grateful to Björn Sundmark both for his invaluable mentorship and for the exceptional work he has done as *Bookbird* editor over the past four years. Björn's commitment to *Bookbird* has recently culminated in the journal's acceptance in Scopus, an important recognition of the high academic quality, impressive range of subjects, and international relevance of *Bookbird*.

Building on Björn's legacy and on the legacy of the editors who preceded him, we are extremely proud of this first *Bookbird* issue under our editorship. It addresses a theme that is important and timely, and we are particularly happy to be able to open this special issue on agency, voice, and identity with the printed version of a powerful and moving speech delivered by Deborah Ellis at the 2018 IBBY Congress in Athens. As Deborah explains, she chose to title her keynote talk "Before They Give the Order" because there needs to be "a before":

We have had plenty of "After They Give the Order." Nearly seventy million refugees are on the move all around the world today because of "after they give the order." Animal species are on the brink of extinction because of "after they give the order."...

But what I really want is a "Day Before." How can we change things so that there can be a Day Before? I want a Day Before the order is given to drop the drone on the wedding party in Afghanistan. I want a Day Before the order is given to toss the chemicals in the river. I want a Day Before the order is given to produce more guns so that someone can take them and shoot up a movie theater or a rock concert or a gay bar or a school.

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. One important way in which people do this is by sharing their stories. Experiencing acts of agency through reading and writing offers powerful ways to consider the potential for our own agency and to learn about other members of our local and global communities.

In her article in this issue titled “Reading Radiantly: Embracing the Power of Picturebooks to Cultivate the Social Imagination,” Kelly K. Wissman argues that picturebooks may illuminate new ways of thinking, inspire new readings of the world. To read radiantly means to be open to books that may take us outside of ourselves, our own experiences, realities, and points of view. Drawing on collaborative inquiries with four elementary teachers in the United States who intentionally incorporated diverse picturebooks into their teaching, the article reveals the potential for cultivating social imagination and creating space for agency and activism.

The girl protagonists in a series of Australian historical fiction analyzed by Melanie Duckworth in her feature article assert their voice, agency, and identity through reading and writing, alongside comparable acts of creation, like storytelling, dancing, and drawing. Duckworth observes, “Reading offers the characters of these novels a chance to understand and question their worlds, and writing offers them a chance to remake them.” She claims that the *Our Australian Girl* series introduces the reader to significant aspects of Australian history and cultural multiplicity while having the potential of nurturing agency development.

Sarani Roy demonstrates that literature even has the potential to reclaim an entire nation’s social and cultural agency and identity. In her article “When Child Is the Father of Man,” Roy explores the ways in which the Bengali fairy tale collections of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributed to the postcolonial project of imagining a new age and a new nation, by dismantling the binary of the righteous/rational/dependable/intelligent father and the disobedient/unreasonable/undisciplined child.

This issue’s cover illustration by Igor Oleynikov, winner of the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award, is in itself a visualization of child agency. Taken from the Russian translation of Kate DiCamillo’s *The Magician’s Elephant* (first published in English in 2009), the image depicts the scene during which, against all odds, against all the lies and obstacles raised by adults, an orphan boy named Peter is finally reunited with his long-lost younger sister, Adele. These children manage to exert their voice and assert their agency:

“You said she died. Time and again, you told me that she was dead. You lied.”...“I am done talking now, sir,” said Peter.



Janelle Mathis is a professor of literacy and children’s literature at the University of North Texas, where she teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses centered on international children’s literature and its applications in research and instruction. She presents regularly at international children’s literature conferences, including IBBY Congresses and IRSL and has served on award committees, including the Outstanding International Books Award of USBBY. Janelle publishes on children’s literature studies, and recently co-edited with Holly Johnson and Kathy Short a book titled *Critical Content Analysis of Children’s and Young Adult Literature* (2017).

“Tomorrow I will go to the elephant and then I will find my sister and I will be done with you.” (102-03)

...

She simply turned from the window and ran in her bare feet down the dark stairway and into the great room and from there into the hallway and past the sleeping Sister Marie. She threw wide the door to the orphanage. “Here!” she shouted. “Here I am!” (176)

We certainly hope that reading this special issue of *Bookbird*, along with the thinking, speaking, teaching, and writing it inspires, will help us enhance our own voices, identities, and agency in the world, as well as those of real children who are currently facing real challenges and oppressions. And here is our answer to all those who want us to believe that the world will always be the same, as expressed by a caring adult in *The Magician’s Elephant*:

“The world cannot be changed,” said Gloria. “The world is what the world is and has forever been.” “No,” said Leo Matienne softly, “I will not believe that. For here is Peter standing before us, asking us to make it something different.” (DiCamillo 142-43)

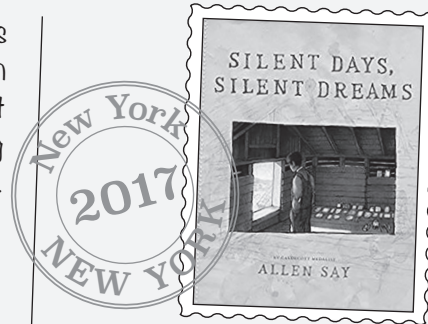
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DiCamillo, Kate. *The Magician’s Elephant*. Somerville: Candlewick, 2015.

This fictionalized biography tells the story of James Castle, an autistic, deaf, completely self-taught American artist, born in Idaho in 1899. The art he produced, his silent interpretation of the world, made sense of his rural setting through drawings of houses, furniture, symbols, and people. Many of them were produced with homemade materials, such as sticks dipped into soot and saliva, then applied to scraps of paper. As an artist and a human being, Castle was sadly misunderstood, but at middle age, his startlingly childlike yet innovative art was discovered and given attention.

Castle’s boyhood and life are beautifully—and painfully—depicted in watercolors, pencil, and some of the same primitive tools used by Castle. Say’s three final portraits of Castle are simple and sensitive. The book raises an important question: How many children today—special needs or not—also find solace and meaning in their art?

Patricia Bloem



Allen Say

Silent Days, Silent Dreams

New York: Arthur Levine Books, 2017. 64 pp.

ISBN: 987-0-545092761-1

(Nonfiction; ages 10+)

Before They Give the Order

A 2018 IBBY Keynote Speech

by DEBORAH ELLIS

At the recent IBBY Congress in Athens, Deborah Ellis took attendees inside the stories that surround her books as she related her concerns for today's society. Her keynote talk, focused on the power of reading, story, and books, is shared here.

Time passes. It has been twenty-two years since the Taliban took over control of Kabul, Afghanistan, in September of 1996. Afghanistan is a small, land-locked country in the Hindu Kush mountains that goes in and out of the West's attention. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, prompting a response from the West that armed and funded thugs who had no greater interest at heart than their own power. Out of these thugs grew the army that became the Taliban.

When the Russians left Afghanistan, Afghanistan left the newspapers, until the Taliban took over and the country was once again in the headlines. One of the things that made the news was the crimes against the women of the country. Women could not leave their homes without a male relative escorting them. Girls and women were kicked out of school, and this was in a country where, at one point, women had outnumbered men at Kabul University. Women were no longer allowed to work outside their homes. They could not laugh out loud in the street, sing, make noise when they walked, or show their bare faces to the sun.

I am a feminist, which means I believe that women are of equal value to men. I am from Canada, a country not without its faults and struggles but where women and girls are not limited—in theory, at least—by the fact that they are female. When I heard about the crimes the men of the Taliban were perpetrating against women, I decided to get involved.

After a couple of trips to the Afghan border with Pakistan and months in the refugee camps meeting with people and learning about their lives, I was able to share the stories of these refugees with others. I did a book called *Women of the Afghan War* (2000), which is a compilation of the interviews with these women, children, and men. I was also able to do three novels for young people about Afghanistan—*The Breadwinner* (2001),

When I heard about the crimes the men of the Taliban were perpetrating against women, I decided to get involved.

Parvana's Journey (2003), and *Mud City* (2004). I am eternally grateful to Greenwood Books for taking a chance on a novel for young readers about Afghanistan and children trying to survive in the horrors and oppression of war.

A few years ago, my editor at Greenwood Books, the amazing Shelley Tanaka, said that the Greenwood gang had been talking and thought it might be time for a fourth book in the series. This was ten years after the fall of the Taliban from official power. When a publisher asks you to write a book, you never say no. Plus, it was an opportunity for me to go into Afghanistan and see what was happening at that time. Previous trips had taken me only to the Afghan border inside Pakistan. It was a dream for me to be able to see Kabul.

While I was there, I met with and interviewed as many young people as would agree to talk with me, and whose parents would allow them to share their stories with me. I found such a wealth of eager young minds and hearts, excited to build and know and grow. During the Taliban regime, schools for girls were closed and women were not allowed to work outside the home. Most of the teachers had been women, so now boys were out of luck, too, as far as education went. Extreme poverty coupled with decades of war and chaos have left the country with high rates of illiteracy. According to the United Nations Human Development Report of 2008, only 28% of adults in Afghanistan could read and write. That number dropped to 13% when those adults were women. More recently, the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan self-reported in 2017 that the average years of schooling is 3.8 (Akbari).

Since the fall of the Taliban, the international community has partnered with the people of Afghanistan to raise literacy levels and encourage education for all. It is an uphill struggle—one undertaken at times with enthusiasm and at times with suspicion. In addition to regular schools, literacy classes have been introduced into nontraditional spaces to make them as accessible and acceptable as possible.

I want to share one of those interviews I did in Afghanistan with you. A small house in a run-down area of Kabul is a gathering point for widows and their daughters. The women have all experienced trauma brought on by the war and related violence. After receiving counseling for a few months, they take part in literacy classes. Each step forward gives them more power over their own lives. I was invited into this space. Women were crowded into a low-ceilinged, damp room with walls decorated by the handicrafts they have made. They sat on mats on the floor. There was no room for any other furniture.

Faranoz, fourteen years old, is part of this gathering, and tells the following story:

Everyone says I have too much intelligence. They laugh when they say it, so it is a joke, but they are right. I am very smart. A year ago, I could not read anything at all, but now I can read all sorts of things—books, poems, everything. I can write, too. This proves I am smart.

Each step forward gives them more power over their own lives.

I live in a poor area of Kabul. My father died thirteen years ago. No one in this room has a father or a husband. The men died in the war or from sickness or they were murdered. Husbands and fathers die for all sorts of reasons. Some get shot. Sometimes there are road accidents. Some fathers go to Iran or to Pakistan to look for work and they never come back.

My mother has no job, so we are very poor. My oldest brother is in charge of us. He is the one who said I should not go to school, so that is why I spent so many years not knowing how to read. I don't know why he said no school for me. Does he have to give a reason? Maybe he doesn't think I am smart enough for school. Maybe he is afraid I would end up smarter than him, and then how would he be able to tell me what to do?

The women in this class have all been through bad times in the war. I was very small when the war ended, but I hear everyone talk about it. Our lessons are supposed to last one and a half hours, but they often go longer because women want to talk about their problems. But that was more in the beginning. As they become better at reading they want to talk more about reading and less about the things that make them sad. This meeting room is really just a room in a woman's house. The woman used to be married to a man who belonged to the Taliban. He was a very bad man. He beat her and made her be with other men, a very disrespectful thing. But she was very brave. She went to the Supreme Court and got a divorce. I don't know when this was—sometime after the war. This is her brother's house. She lives here, and he lets her have this room for us to meet.

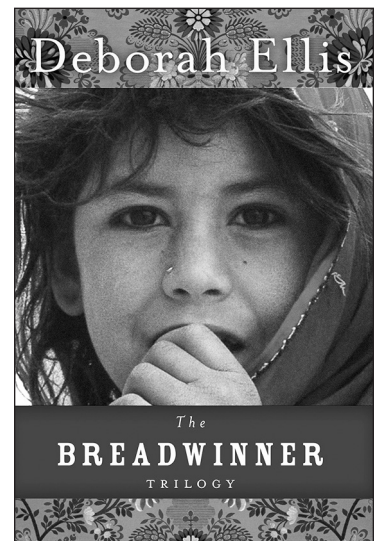
Our teacher is a lawyer as well as a teacher. She has told us about how she defended women who were being beaten or treated badly. She says important people have offered her important jobs, but she prefers to be here in this room with us, because we are important, too.

The first day of classes, many women were crying because their lives are so hard and no one ever asks them about that. They never just get to sit and talk with other women. They are expected to just live their lives and be quiet. But the teacher here started to ask them and that's when they started to cry. Some would not talk at all at first. Even I was too afraid to shake the teacher's hand or even to look at her. I was afraid that she would see that I was not smart. But now I know I am smart, so I am not afraid anymore.

After a year of learning to read, we are all different people. We can stand up straight and read out the words we have written in loud, clear voices. We laugh more than we cry.

Even though I am young, I know many things. Sometimes the older women forget I'm in the room and they talk as if I'm not here. I hear all about their lives, about their children who died or their husbands who hit them. I know that some women did not tell their families they were coming here. They said they were going to the market or to a clinic, or they only came to class when no one was at home to stop them. Only after many months had passed did they tell their families, and by then they could read some things, so their families said, "You are using your time well, you are learning something, you are happier, okay, you can continue to go."

The books we most like to read are about law, the constitution, and about religion. Through these books we learn we have rights. And if our families disagree,



we can point to the book and say, "Here! It is written down! The law must be respected." Religion does not give men the right to beat us, and now we can prove it.

Some of the stories are funny now, because we know better, but they weren't funny when they happened. One woman says she got a prescription from the doctor and she got it mixed up with some other papers because she couldn't read. What she took to the pharmacy wasn't the prescription, it was the electric bill! Women talk about how they used to be like blind, but reading has made them able to see. I used to think, if only I could read, then I would be happy. But now I just want more! I want to read about poets and Afghan history and science and about places outside Afghanistan. Most of us write down our own stories, too, and we decorate the borders of the pages with drawings of flowers and designs, because that is the Afghan way.

My brother lets me come here because it's not really a school. More just a place where women get together to learn. There are only women here, so he thinks I won't get into trouble and make him look bad. I hope he lets me go to a proper school one day because I like to be around books and I would like to be a doctor one day. I think I would be a good doctor. What else can I do with so much intelligence!

In preparing to address the recent IBBY Congress, I spent a lot of time thinking about the power of stories, not just the ones we read, but the ones that are told to us and the ones that we tell ourselves. In Faranoz's case, her brother has a story that has Faranoz unable to act independently of him, a story in which he must keep tight control of her behavior and her thoughts. Faranoz has managed, with the help of the informal school, to write herself a story outside of her brother's, where she has capabilities and dreams that do not involve him.

The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are incredibly powerful. My mother died twenty years ago of pancreatic cancer, and I miss her all the time. While my sister and I were growing up, one of the stories of our family was how our mother had polio when she was younger, how she was in the hospital room and heard her own mother out in the hallway, talking to the doctor and saying, "I don't want any cripple coming into my house." Years later, when Mom was grown, she consulted doctors who specialized in post-polio syndrome. She got fitted for braces for her legs to help support her with her walking. Because she had polio, there were many things she could not do. She could not learn to drive a car because of polio. She could not swim because polio made her too unsteady to walk into the lake or the pool. So many limitations were put on her because she'd had polio.

The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are incredibly powerful.

But here's the thing. It wasn't true. She never had polio. After she died I spent time with Mom's sister and asked her about Mom's polio time, and her sister said she never had it. When I heard that, it took some time for me to decide which version of the story to believe. At first, after choosing to believe my aunt's version, I was angry with Mom and wanted her to come back so I could ask her why she lied. Then, after a very short time, I just wanted her to come back. When I see her again in the next life, I'm not going to ask her about it. I don't even care. I just miss her.

The burden of this story that my mother carried with her must have

haunted her all her life. What started as a comment made for whatever reason could have turned into a narrative she was unable to break away from. The story did not lift her up, like Faranoz's story did. Her story held her back.

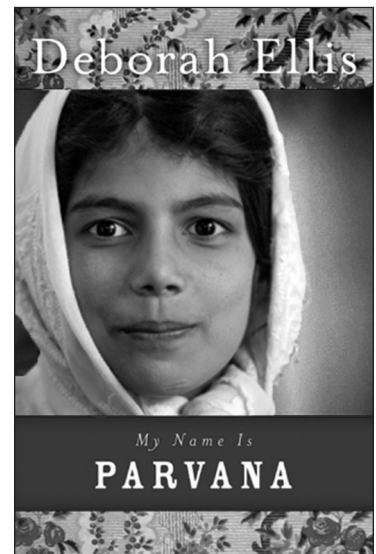
For the past couple of years, I've been meeting with and recording the stories of young people who have been in conflict with the law in Canada. Canada is a rich country full of smart people, but there are still things that we get repeatedly wrong. I did meet with a couple of arrogant, privileged young men who needed to be reminded that there are other human beings on the planet, but for the most part, the girls and boys I met with all had stories with the common threads of loss, abuse, and low expectations. Here is a bit of one of those interviews. The young man's name is Peter, and he is eighteen years old:

I was put into foster care the moment I was born. I grew up in it. That's been my whole life. I have real brothers that I haven't seen since I was four years old because we got split up and nobody kept us in touch with each other. I've been in a number of foster homes—seven, I think. Changing homes is very stressful. You're not just changing bedrooms, you're changing parents and foster brothers and sisters, you're changing neighborhoods and schools and everything. I think I was moved around so much because I never liked to follow rules or have people tell me how to live my life. These foster parents, that I knew were not my parents, would tell me to do something and I'd just yell at them. Some of them would try to get me to fit in with their family. I guess that's not a bad thing, but it always made me feel like, for sure, I was not really a part of them. I was an extra. An outsider.

When they want to get rid of you, you don't get any warning. When a family doesn't want you anymore, you're just gone. You're having supper and your worker shows up, puts your stuff in a garbage bag if you don't have a backpack and you go with her. You just go and you never look back. Or the Children's Aid worker would pick me up at school and take me to the new place and I'd never see my old foster parents again. Or you could be watching TV with the other kids in the house after school and there'd be a knock at the door and suddenly I'd be taken away. Or they do give you a warning and say, "Next week we're moving you to a new foster home." Then you have to stay the rest of the week with your old family, knowing they don't want you. Why should you follow their rules and do chores for them when they don't care about you? I often wonder what all those families thought about after they closed their doors on me.

Imagine the stories that he and others in his situation have to overcome. So many people with power over him have stories about him that they expect him to dwell in. His birth parents have a story about him, his many foster parents have a story about him, his social workers have a story about him, the people in the court system have a story about him, his teacher has a story about him—how in the world can he push all those stories aside in order to be able to write a story for himself?

It is possible for negative stories to turn into positive stories almost in the blink of an eye. One of the girls I talked with for the youth justice book was in and out of detention and foster care all her young life. She'd



been raised in chaos. Every time she went to a new foster home, she had to change schools. One day, she was on a city bus and one of her former teachers got on the bus. The girl remembered her, because children remember their teachers, but she did not even imagine that the teacher would remember her. After all, she'd only been in that teacher's classroom for a few months. But that teacher came right up to this girl, called her by her name, spoke kindly about her time in the class, and asked, sincerely, how the girl was doing. This moment changed that girl's life. Her story was no longer someone who was worthy only of being passed around to people who didn't care. Her story now was being a person worthy of being remembered,

Her story now was being a person worthy of being remembered, worthy of striving for greater things, and able to one day achieve them.

worthy of striving for greater things, and able to one day achieve them. She managed to complete college and is now mentoring other young women in trouble—changing their stories.

On a larger scale, positive stories can be used to change destructive stories. One of the oldest recorded diseases in our human history is leprosy. Ever since we have been drawing and writing, we have been drawing pictures of people with leprosy and writing about the experience of it. Leprosy is a disease that the sufferers wear. The disease's signs upon the body make it impossible for the afflicted to hide. It is also a contagious disease, although less so than originally thought, so it has been one that we have always been afraid of. For most of our history, we have lived in the story that those with leprosy were cursed, sinful, dirty, monsters. People with leprosy were—and in some places, still are—made to live on the fringes of society, scorned, unwanted, and uncared for. Canada has our own history with this. We had an island off the coast of British Columbia in the Pacific Ocean and another island off the east coast, in the Atlantic Ocean, where we would put people with leprosy and basically leave them there to die. This was in the 1800s, when we did not know much about medicine, but we did know about basic kindness, so we should have done better.

I spent a bit of time in West Bengal, India, a few years ago, meeting with people affected by leprosy in order to write a book about their lives and raise a bit of money for The Leprosy Mission. It was an honor to sit with people and learn about how their lives and the lives of their families have been affected by their diagnosis, and how their lives can be remade once they get the treatment. One of the great things I witnessed was the way the leprosy hospital there is trying to change the story of leprosy. In addition to treating leprosy, the hospital also treats eye ailments. There is one waiting room for patients. When people come into the hospital to get their eyes treated, they sit in the waiting room right beside people with leprosy. There is no other place for them to sit if they want treatment. So, they sit beside the person with leprosy. Maybe they strike up a conversation while they are waiting to be called. Maybe they find out they have relatives from the same village, or they both hate the traffic, or one has a packet of biscuits that he shares with the other. The person getting his eyes cared

for goes home and talks about the person with leprosy he sat with, and how it was no big deal, they seemed like a regular person. The person with leprosy sees themselves having an ordinary, passing-the-time-of-day conversation with someone without leprosy, same as people do all the time, all the world over, and that person begins to know that their leprosy is just a disease, not an identity, and that they are deserving of respect, the same as everyone else. That simple act of one shared waiting room is changing the story of leprosy for many, many people.

The story of HIV/AIDS is a similar story of prejudice, fear, stigma, and ignorance. In sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS has killed millions of people and left millions more orphaned and vulnerable. Many years ago, I traveled to Malawi and Zambia to meet with young people there affected by the AIDS pandemic, to see how their lives were changed by the disease. A group called the Story Workshop in Malawi was using stories to address the most damaging part of AIDS, which, according to those living with AIDS, was the stigma. Malawi is a nation where poverty has kept many people out of school, and not everyone has access to newspapers or to televisions. Radio plays are both entertainment and education. For many years, the number one radio soap opera in Malawi was *Zimachitika*, created by the Story Workshop. Every week millions of listeners of all ages tuned in. In villages where there was only one radio, the whole village would gather around to hear the adventures of a family as they deal with issues that affect everyone in the country, including AIDS, poverty, and child abuse.

The show was taped in an ordinary house in Blantyre. One room in the house was turned into a recording studio, with blankets on the walls to help with the sound and a collection of donated recording materials. I was able to meet with some of the young actors as they were about to record an episode of the show. What follows are the words of ten-year-old Enelesi:

I'm here at the Story Workshop to take part in a play for the radio. There are seven children in my family. I'm number six. My father works at Malawi Telecom Limited. My mother stays at home and works in the house.

Here is my usual day. I wake up and check to see if the bathroom is free. Usually, though, Dad is in there. So I go out and sweep the yard, which is my chore. When Dad gets out of the bathroom, I go in and wash and put on my school uniform. It is white around the neck and the rest of it is blue. After I'm dressed I drink tea and sometimes I have some bread. Sometimes I even have an egg. Then I pick up my book bag and go to school. English is my best subject. My worst is agriculture, where we have to learn about crops and soil. I don't like to study that.

I know a lot about AIDS. I know you can get it from sharing a razor blade. We talk about it in school, but my friends and I don't talk about it among ourselves. It is a teacher thing to talk about. There are children in my class whose parents have died. Actually, there are a lot of children like that. One girl in my class, her name is Violet, has lost both of her parents. I don't know what made them die. She doesn't talk about it. None of the kids whose parents have died talk about it. And my mother says it's not polite to ask. AIDS is my biggest fear because it can kill you. AIDS and getting pregnant. I don't want either one to happen to me.

I have two brothers. The oldest one is all right, but the youngest one bothers

me a lot. We argue about all sorts of things. Here's one of the things we argue about. We buy our bread in plastic bags and when the bread is finished, we argue about who gets the bag. We roll the empty bags into a ball to play with. My parents say we should save the bags together and make one ball we can both use. But, of course, that won't work at all. With my friends, my favorite game to play is called Fly. In this game, one kid stands on one side, another on the other, and there is someone in the middle. The one in the middle has to try to catch the ball when it is thrown. That is called Fly.

The thing I like best about my life is that I am hardly ever sick. I know lots of people who get sick a lot, and I am glad to not be one of them. My sister gets sick a lot. She is in my class at school even though she is much older. This is because she is sick so much. I don't know what's wrong with her. My parents won't say. When I ask them, their faces get sad, so I don't ask them. Sometimes my sister gets a little better, and then she gets sick all over again.

Let me tell you how I got this job at the Story Workshop. It was announced over the radio that they were looking for actors, so my parents brought me over. I had to audition. There was a long, long queue of people who wanted to be in the plays, both grown-ups and children. I had to stand in the queue for a very long time. They gave us three pages of the play to read. I got the job over all the others. This is my first day on the radio. I wasn't nervous at my audition and I'm not nervous now. I just know I'll be great.

I loved Enelesi's spirit so much that I used her as a model for Binti, the main character in the novel for young people I did about AIDS in Malawi, called *The Heaven Shop* (2004). When kids who have never been to Malawi, or have never met anyone who is HIV positive, read her story and the other stories in the book of interviews called *Our Stories, Our Songs* (2005), I hope they will take away an awareness that we all have much more in common than we have differences—that kids on the other side of the world argue with their brothers and sisters, that there is joy in trying and achieving and doing the simple, regular things that are part of being in a family, anywhere. The story of the Story Workshop can change for them the story they have in their head about the African continent and the people who live there.

In his book *The Storytelling Animal*, Jonathan Gottschall says that “humans live great chunks of their lives inside fictional stories, in worlds where goodness is generally endorsed and rewarded and badness is condemned and punished” (134). He proposes that “stories make societies better by encouraging us to behave ethically. As with sacred myths, ordinary stories, television shows to fairy tales, steep us all in the same powerful norms and values. They relentlessly stigmatize antisocial behavior and just as relentlessly celebrate prosocial behavior. We learn by association that if we are more like the protagonists, we will be more likely to reap the rewards of the protagonists” (134).

The Moral Laboratory (Hakemulder) profiles a study by Markus Appel, for which Appel studied television watchers. He found that “people who mainly watched drama and comedy shows on television, as opposed to news programs, had substantially stronger ‘just world’ beliefs” (qtd. in Gottschall 136). Appel concludes that fiction, by constantly marinating

our brains in the theme of poetic justice, may be partly responsible for the overly optimistic sense that the world is, on the whole, a just place. People generally do believe that life punishes the vicious and rewards the virtuous, and this is despite the fact that, as Appel puts it, “This is generally not the case. Bad things happen to good people all the time and most crimes go unpunished. And yet the fact that we take this lesson to heart may be an important part of what makes societies work” (qtd. in Gottschall 136).

I wonder, as I’m writing this, if it would be better to present a more realistic picture of how the world works. Would it hurt less if the transgressions against us were not seen as personal, but just as the way of things? Would we be better prepared when things do not roll out as they do in a story? Or would we see it as permission to do unto others that which they are doing unto us? And who wants to be the one to tell the young that the world is a violent, cold, uncaring place, so they should get those expectations lowered?

When I was a young woman, I bought a postcard in a women’s bookstore that had a quote on it by a female artist—I forget who. The quote was: “Art is not a reflection of positive reality. It is the seeking of ideal truth.” I kept that postcard taped to my wall for years, even though I didn’t understand it.

I think I get it now, though. We create the world we want to have. Stories, especially those for children, are not just about what is but, more importantly, what can be. We want our young readers to know they can be active participants in the shaping of their own stories, and through that, the world. Stories, written and told, can build us up and raise us all up together.

But what if the stories are bald-faced lies? What if the story is that the priest can do no wrong? What if the story is that one group of people is superior to another group of people? What if the story is that animals cannot feel pain and have no emotional life? What if the story is that the oceans and rivers are endlessly renewable? What if the story is that the only color is white, the only gender is male, the only way of loving is heterosexual, the only thing worth striving for is money, and that having power over others is the only way to be?

So, what is the role of children’s literature in all of this? Research from the late 1960s and 1970s has shown that children’s attitudes can be changed and enlightened through exposure to books. They can grow empathy toward animals, grow empathy toward the suffering of other people, and learn to see people who seem to be “different” as just the same, with the same capacity for love, joy, and pain as the child herself.

The books we read when we are children certainly stay in our minds, even as adults. Lines from books I read as a child are as much a part of me as my own name. My hope for my own books is that children who read them when they are young will carry the compassion they hopefully learn

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from the books into their adult, decision-making lives. The research seems to bear it out. Children can learn good things from the books we provide them. That's good news. That makes the work done by authors, illustrators, scholars, teachers, librarians, and others who work to put books into children's hands valuable.

In November of 1915, a young German corporal was stationed in France, in a small country town a couple of miles behind enemy lines. He had some free time and a bit of money in his pocket. Instead of spending it on schnapps or cigarettes, he walked into town and bought a little book about the cultural treasures of Berlin. The other soldiers made fun of him, partly because he would use the lulls in the fighting to hunker down in the trenches and read. He stayed away from the joking and other pastimes to break up the boredom between the terrors of fighting and disappeared into his books.

Sounds like someone I could relate to. How many recesses did I spend hunched over a book as a child and not playing with the other kids? The young man kept up his habit of reading and his love of books all his life. He amassed a personal library of more than sixteen thousand books—history, philosophy, poetry, literature. The name of this man was Adolf Hitler. Tyrant. Mass murderer. Book lover. Sixteen thousand books in his library! Sixteen thousand! At least some of the books he read must have given him a positive view of the world, contrary to the views of National Socialism. The story of his reading is chronicled in a book called *Hitler's Private Library* (Ryback), reviewed in the *New York Times* by J. Heilbrunn.

And here we arrive at the gates of Hell. Because the most wonderful books written by the most wonderful writers, published by the most wonderful publishers, taught by the most wonderful teachers all come up against this: human beings will make up their own minds.

One of the greatest children's authors Canada has ever produced is the great Jean Little. She went to school with a woman named Jane, who ran a funeral parlor in Paris, Ontario, where I grew up. Jane and her husband became friends with my mom and dad when I was in kindergarten, and Jane would give me Jean's books. It felt like a miracle that she would actually know a writer. I got to meet Jean when I was twelve. She was going blind at that point but could still see a bit. She read the pages of the novel I had started, holding the messy handwritten pages up close to her face, and managed to find something kind to say about it.

The Jean Little book that is my favorite is called *From Anna* (1972). It is about a family who comes to Canada from Germany in 1933. Anna is the youngest of five children. She's awkward, slower than the others, and we find out later that this is because she can barely see. At the beginning of the book, Anna is feverishly watching down the street for her father to come home. When she sees him, she runs out to him and tells him the news that her sister got in trouble for suggesting the school sing a particular song during the morning assembly. Anna's father then boldly starts singing the song, right out in the street, and Anna joins in. The song is *Die Gedanken sind frei*, which means "Thoughts Are Free."

Die Gedanken sind frei
 My thoughts freely flower
 Die Gedanken sind frei
 My thoughts give me power.
 No scholar can map them, no hunter can trap them
 No one can deny
 Die Gedanken sind frei.

So I think as I please, and this gives me pleasure
 My conscience decrees, this right I must treasure
 My thoughts will not cater
 To duke or dictator
 My thoughts freely fly
 Die Gedanken sind frei.

Although I may not sing this to the proper tune, the point is: Books we read when we are young stay with us.

I called this speech “Before They Give the Order” because there needs to be a before. We have had plenty of “After They Give the Order.” Nearly seventy million refugees are on the move all around the world today because of “after they give the order.” Animal species are on the brink of extinction because of “after they give the order.”

We have some knowledge of how to deal with “after the order.” We can get food to people who are hungry. We can get emergency shelters and even emergency showers and laundry facilities to refugees. I am certain that people reading this have been involved in caring for those who are affected after the order. We can get books to children in war zones, vaccines to people suffering from epidemics created, in part, by the poverty that comes after the order. We are learning more and more about how to care for the emotional well-being of those who have been subjected to violence in all its many heinous forms. There is much more to do, and we are learning.

But what I really want is a “Day Before.” How can we change things so that there can be a Day Before? I want a Day Before the order is given to drop the drone on the wedding party in Afghanistan. I want a Day Before the order is given to toss the chemicals in the river. I want a Day Before the order is given to produce more guns so that someone can take them and shoot up a movie theater or a rock concert or a gay bar or a school. I want a Day Before the high-ups in a church give the order to cover up the child abuse done in their name and move the abuser to a new town, a new church, a new set of victims. I want a Day Before the order is given to bomb a school bus full of eight-year-olds returning home from a much-needed celebratory outing. There must be a Day Before.

Again, what is the role of children’s literature in all of this? Terrible things continue to happen. So many people are trapped inside another person’s story of them. I know how hard it is to break free of that, to carve

I called this speech “Before They Give the Order” because there needs to be a before. We have had plenty of “After They Give the Order.”

out your own space and your own story, when the powerful forces around you are trying desperately to hold you into *their* story. The woman who is repeatedly beaten and begins to believe the beatings are her fault. The child passed from place to place, who is repeatedly told they are unwanted and so that is what they believe. The people who are told by their leader that his way is the only way and they are too scared or too worn out or too hungry to oppose him.

I think often of that girl in trouble, in and out of schools and prisons, who meets a former teacher on the city bus and the teacher remembers her name. I think that the best of children's literature is like that teacher. The best books remember the child's name, say to the child that she is known, she is important, she has greatness inside of her.

I believe that we are responsible for the information that is in our heads. If we are raised on nothing but Nazi philosophy, okay, then we have an excuse for being Nazis. It would not be our fault. But the moment a counter-

Good children's literature can provide that alternative piece. It can provide a new way of looking at the world and it can provide a welcoming, sturdy support for the child that says, "We have faith in your power to choose well."

ing piece of information enters our brains, then we are making a choice. We are choosing which information to follow. We are choosing the way we want to go. Good children's literature can provide that alternative piece. It can provide a new way of looking at the world and it can provide a welcoming, sturdy support for the child that says, "We have faith in your power to choose well."

I am deeply honored to share this space with like-minded readers and involved IBBY members. This body has dedicated itself to that great Before Day, when the gun is put down, the bomb is dismantled, and the drone stays on the ground. We do not have to repeat the same mistakes and misdeeds of the past. We can create a world where the crimes are stopped—before they give the order.

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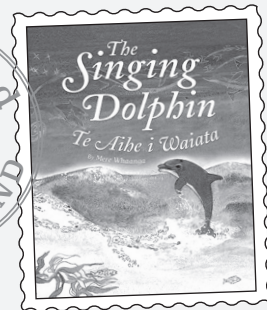


Deborah Ellis is an award-winning author, a feminist, and a peace activist. Deborah penned the international best seller *The Breadwinner*, as well as many challenging and beautiful works of fiction and nonfiction about children all over the world. Her most recent book is *Sit*, which tells the stories of nine children and the situations they find themselves in, often through no fault of their own. In each story, a child makes a decision and takes action, be that a tiny gesture or a life-altering choice.

Potiki, who loves to sing, is the youngest brother of three. The eldest, Tahī, is good at working the land, and Rua, the second brother, has fishing skills. They never want Potiki to accompany them on hunting and fishing trips because his singing disturbs them. One day, Potiki hides under the canoe nets, but they find him and throw him into the sea. When their grandmother asks Tahī and Rua about Potiki, they deny any knowledge. However, the whales tell the grandmother of a new dolphin swimming in the region, and she knows the brothers were lying. As punishment, she turns them into rocks in the Pathway of the Whales.

The peritext states that occasionally on the east coast of the North Island of New Zealand, a dolphin plays with people in the sea. The story, in both Māori and English, is accompanied by beautiful ink and watercolor illustrations.

Nicola Daly



Mere Whaanga

*The Singing Dolphin /
Te Aihe i Waiata*

Auckland: Scholastic, 2017.

32 pp.

ISBN: 9781775434023

(Picturebook; ages 4–7)

Reading Radiantly:

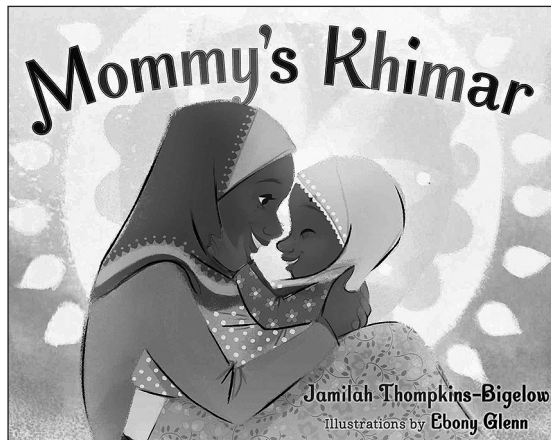
Embracing the Power of Picturebooks to Cultivate the Social Imagination

by KELLY K. WISSMAN

Drawing on collaborative inquiries with four elementary teachers in the United States who intentionally incorporated diverse picturebooks into their teaching, the following article reveals the potential for cultivating social imagination and creating space for agency and activism. The importance of picturebooks for today's readers is emphasized to attune not only to the beauty in the world but also to relationships to others and responsibilities in light of social inequalities.

Fortified with a notebook, an audio recorder, and a sense of wonder, I have collected vibrant vignettes of young people enthralled by picturebooks. I've watched Amina's eyes dance as she follows the flow of the vivid yellow fabric transformed into a headscarf in Jami-

lah Thompkins-Bigelow's *Mommy's Khimar* (2018). I've documented how Salvador, quiet and watchful most days, enthusiastically calls out the Spanish words in Duncan Tonatiuh's *Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin* (2010) during an interactive read-aloud. I've listened as Raina reflects on the meaning embedded in an illustrator's choice of a deep shade of blue for the endpages in James Rumford's *Silent Music: A Story of Baghdad* (2008). I've witnessed Rakim, Michael,



and Eric, so-called “struggling readers” all, advocate for Colombian children's access to schools and libraries after reading Jeanette Winter's *Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia* (2010).

Reading Radiantly

As I look across these collected vignettes, I notice the particu-

larly high levels of engagement that seemed to radiate from the children's encounters with picturebooks featuring characters navigating a beautiful, complex, and resonant world. When teachers not only shared these books with characters on quests for connection, love, home, or justice, but also engaged children in dialogic explorations of them, there was a depth, complexity, and vibrancy in the discussions that surrounded the books. Within these moments, Amina collapsed in- and out-of-school boundaries, Salvador found his voice,

¹ All student names are pseudonyms.

Raina viewed the text with an artist's eye, and Rakim, Michael, and Eric shook off old labels and made a difference in the world.

Within the tumultuous times in which we live, I believe we need the transformative power of picturebooks to open up conversations about our shared world, that connect us to the beautiful, the possible, and the hopeful, and that inspire agency and activism within ourselves and the young people with whom we share texts. In this article, I focus on the potential of picturebooks to foster the social imagination and to promote what I call "reading radiantly."

I understand the social imagination in two ways. First, I see it as the capacity of a reader to grasp the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of characters and to extrapolate beyond what is presented in the text to imagine the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others (Johnston). Judith Lysaker and Clare Tonge describe the social imagination as the product of the dialogic exchange between the reader and the text and note that "readers form relationships with fictional others through the use of social imagination as part of the meaning-making process" (634). Second, I draw on philosopher Maxine Greene's understanding of the social imagination as "the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools" (*Releasing* 5). Greene contends that by activating the social imagination, the arts invite us to become "wide awake" to the troubles and possibilities within our shared world.

Given that picturebooks are aesthetic objects (Sipe), where the visual and verbal sign systems are interdependent and contribute equally to meaning making, they are ideal conduits for engaging children with the arts in the ways

Greene suggests. Kevin Tavin explains that one definition of aesthetics describes a "heightened awareness, radiance of mind, or a moving disposition" (41) we may have when engaging with art. As I've observed students deeply engaged with picturebooks, I've witnessed this "heightened awareness," this "radiance of mind" as

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they become attuned to the text's aesthetic features: the poetics of the language, the beauty of a color, the movement of a line. Within transactions with picturebooks that are also activating the social imagination, the text radiates with insights and knowledge about and for the broader world. As Jessica

Whitelaw writes, "the picturebook has a unique potential to leverage the critical and the aesthetic when social issues are represented and explored through visual art and words in a genre widely characterized by a sense of hopefulness" (34).

When teachers share picturebooks through interactive read-alouds, even more possibilities are unleashed as students construct meaning together, building on each other's responses, raising questions, and engaging in critical readings of the world (Short). Within these transactions with texts, with each other, and with the world, students are, in my view, "reading radiantly." The picturebooks and the pedagogical practices that surround them focus the energies of the class, as students gather round to see, hear, and respond to the book and each other. In these moments, with the students orbiting around the books, it is possible to see how the books radiate a certain kind of energy.

To read radiantly means to have a charged encounter with a picturebook. Within this encounter, the reader has a deep connection with the book and a heightened awareness of its aesthetic features. In these moments, the text may illuminate a new way of thinking and

also inspire a new reading of the world. To read radiantly also means to be open to books that may take us outside of ourselves, our own experiences, realities, and points of view. As a result of this openness, we may be inspired, like rays emitting from the sun, to seek out alternative perspectives, new directions, and unique pathways. To read radiantly also means to be open to the possibility of being moved, changed, and transformed. When we read radiantly, we embrace the imagination as a guide that can lead us forward in creating more equitable futures. On these journeys, we may venture, as Greene describes, “down roads not yet taken to the shapes of a more fulfilling social order, to more vibrant ways of being in the world” (*Releasing* 5).

Fostering the Social Imagination and Reading Radiantly: Four Features of Practice

Below, I present four features of instructional practice that support the development of the social imagination and that are reflective of reading radiantly: (1) selecting texts that broaden the imaginative landscape, (2) encouraging students to attend to the aesthetic attributes of picturebooks, (3) nurturing reading as an act of creativity, and (4) creating space for agency and activism.

For sixteen months, I engaged in collaborative inquiries with four elementary educators who intentionally incorporated diverse picturebooks, many with global themes, into their teaching (Wissman, Burns, Jiampetti, O’Leary, & Tabatabai). Heather, Simeen, Krista, and Maggie taught across urban and suburban schools within the United States and worked with students across a range of socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. During our monthly meetings as well as my time in their classrooms, I witnessed how picturebooks can play transformative roles, brightening the room with beautiful illustrations, moving

students to deep emotions, inspiring deep analysis and unexpected connections. Taking my cue from scholars who highlight the role of the arts and of narrative in making meaning in both teaching and research (e.g., Bell), I render and analyze illustrative examples from classroom practice reflecting these four features that foster the social imagination and that promote reading radiantly.²

As a result of this openness, we may be inspired, like rays emitting from the sun, to seek out alternative perspectives, new directions, and unique pathways.

Selecting Texts That Broaden the Imaginative Landscape

In looking across the classrooms, I learned that to teach with the intention to cultivate the social imagination begins with a belief that children come to texts with an openness and inherent curiosity, and that their responses will surprise, impress, and move us. With this expectation of students’ brilliance also comes the responsibility of seeking out and sharing picturebooks reflective of the great diversity within classrooms and society so that children have a rich set of images from which to reflect on the present and to imagine their futures (Thomas). Of his work with young people Christopher Myers writes, “They create, through the stories they’re given, an atlas of their world, of their relationships to others, of their possible destinations... and yet too often today’s books remain blind to the everyday reality of thousands of children” (“Apartheid”). When Heather, Simeen, Krista, and Maggie made choices related to purchasing books from a small grant that supported our work, we discussed how important it is that children read literature written by diverse authors and how essential it is that this literature reflect the “experiences, perspectives, struggles, and

² In this article, I aim to provide a conceptual exploration, through narrative, of my observations of the cultivation of the social imagination within four instructional contexts. For a more detailed explanation of this study’s methods and methodology, which included fieldwork, interviews, and analysis of documents and classroom transcripts, see Wissman, Burns, Jiampetti, O’Leary, and Tabatabai (2017) and Wissman (2018).

triumphs of its creators” (Brooks and McNair ix). Recognizing how rarely classroom libraries reflect the diversity of our shared world (Thomas), we saw it as our responsibility to teach with culturally and linguistically diverse books.

When Heather, an English as a New Language (ENL) teacher, decided to incorporate culturally and linguistically diverse picturebooks more intentionally into her teaching of students in Grades 3-6 in an urban school, she noticed a tangible shift in her classroom. This shift occurred when she positioned her students not as children solely in need of intervention services, but as young people, many with immigrant backgrounds, with textured stories to share, with rich experiences to puzzle through, and with emergent imaginative landscapes to cultivate (Arizpe, Colomer, and Martínez-Roldán). When Heather shared Meg Medina’s *Mango, Abuela, and Me* (2015), children in her class told their own immigration and family stories. When she read aloud William Kamkwamba’s *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (2012), they marveled at the author’s ingenuity in bringing electricity

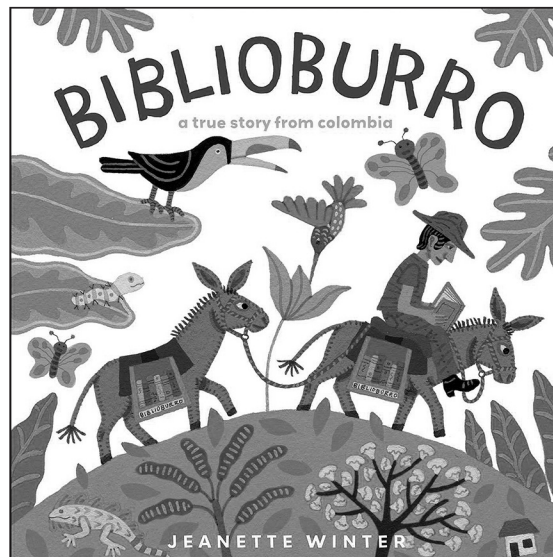
to his village and his tenaciousness in learning English to help him accomplish his task. They saw glimpses of themselves in William as he painstakingly translated technical manuals and persevered when he hit obstacles. When they read of inequalities in the American South and studied the illustrations in William Miller’s *Richard Wright and the Library Card* (1997) and Nikki Giovanni’s *Rosa* (2005), they discussed the power of individuals and of collective resistance. Inspired, they also asked Heather if they could dress up and act out the scenes.

When the students imagined and then

acted out what it would be like to experience what a character in a book does or when they contemplated how and why individuals treat each other, they were activating their social imaginations. With Heather’s guidance and with primary source documents, her students analyzed the historical legacies and personal motivations that shaped the actions of ordinary people making extraordinary choices. Her students from Mexico, Yemen, Sudan, and Puerto Rico saw themselves in these texts, but they also saw images of what they could be, who they could aspire to become, and how they might make the world a better place. Later in the school year, when Heather needed to make some instructional shifts in response to local and state assessments, the students sighed at the test prep passages and leveled texts replacing the diverse picturebooks they had grown accustomed to, imploring, “Where are our books?”

To teach to ignite the social imagination with diverse picturebooks begins with a trust in students to grapple with the content, and a trust that their responses will guide and deepen the learning in the room. At the same

time, these books and Heather’s pedagogy also supported authentic literacy practices of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in alignment with her school’s curricular goals and her objectives as an ENL teacher. The classroom radiated a certain energy as young people hailing from all over the world and speaking many different languages gathered around the picturebooks, locked eyes as they acted out scenes of nonviolent protest, and advocated for the centrality of “our books” in their educations. With picturebooks at the center and with their social imaginations activated, students



reimagined the ENL classroom as a vibrant community of learners grappling with complex social issues and making meaning about a shared world.

Encouraging Students to Attend to the Aesthetic Attributes of Picturebooks

Viewing picturebooks as aesthetic objects (Sipe), with heightened awareness of how every aspect communicates meaning—from the endpages to the trim size to the language choices—deepens engagement (Nikolajeva and Scott; Serafini). With guidance and open-ended questions, children are remarkably gifted in considering not only what choices the illustrator may make in terms of color, line, or media but also *how* and *in what ways* those choices speak to them. When students are more attuned to the aesthetic features of picturebooks, engaging the social imagination also becomes more possible.

For Simeen, a fifth-grade reading teacher, encouraging her students to attend to the aesthetic attributes of picturebooks went hand in hand with her broader instructional goals to cultivate her students' critical perspectives on the world. Simeen taught in an economically advantaged school district with minimal cultural and linguistic diversity; as a teacher committed to social justice, Simeen saw it as her responsibility to “disturb the waters” (Wissman) for her students and to expose them to experiences and lives outside of their own. To do so, she engaged her students in collaborative inquiries into social issues, with carefully chosen texts and through interactive read-alouds and writing opportunities. Reflecting on her hopes for her students, Simeen wrote, “I want them to care about social issues that are outside their

immediate experiences; I want them to question life, look at possibilities and alternatives, and position themselves differently so that they can transform their lives and their worlds” (Tabatabai 103).

During my time in Simeen's classroom, I witnessed how she pursued these goals by engaging her students in an inquiry-based exploration of the experiences of child migrants, drawing on picturebooks, nonfiction texts, and first-person testimonials. In one class she shared Maxine Trottier's *Migrant* (2011), a story in which a young girl travels with her Mennonite family

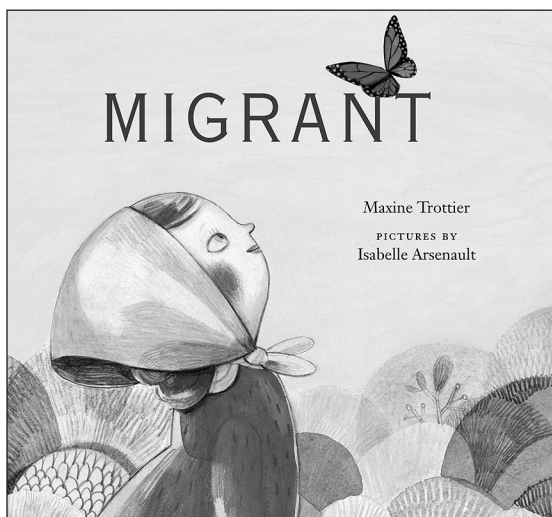
as they follow the seasonal harvest from Mexico to Canada. In highly lyrical prose, Anna likens herself on this journey to a bird, a jackrabbit, a bee, a “feather in the wind.” Before sharing *Migrant*, Simeen reminded the students to consider both the words and the illustrations, instructing:

Think about the title. Think about the endpapers,

OK? Look at the illustrations....Why are they drawing it the way they are drawing it? The colors they are using, all that. The author's choice of language. And then how the pictures and the language make you feel, together. OK? People will take their notes as I am reading, but you will, you know, talk as I read. So, you have questions, you have thoughts, you will share them.

As she opened *Migrant*, students began offering observations of the endpages:

Henry: It looks like the triangles are actually made of cloth and they're glued on. It looks like almost 3-D, like



it's glued on, like they're painted right on there.

Simeen: Mmm. They're painted? Mmm.

Sophia: It kind of like looks because of the arrows and like how they're going one way and then they come back, going the other way...kind of like they're going back and forth.

Simeen: Hmm. Talk some more.

Sophia: Like, how migrants move one place and then they, like, come back, depending on the season.

Simeen: Mmm! It's interesting, guys. Think about what Sophia is thinking about these.

Katherine: Well, they sort of look like the tops of houses....Like, moving from one house to another.

Within this conversation, it is evident not only that the students are keen observers of the illustrated endpages, but also that they were engaged in complex meaning-making about experiences that they themselves have not had, but had read about in other texts and explored in previous classroom inquiries. This is important to keep in mind when considering how and why to provide disciplinary knowledge and vocabulary to children related to the artistry of picturebooks. It is necessary, but not sufficient, to be able to name the particular medium the illustrator has chosen or to observe an illustration is a full bleed. We must also attend to how those choices move us, remind us of knowledge learned in other texts, stir us, and enliven understandings on multiple levels. We must also be willing to allow the art and artistry of picturebooks to open us up to experiences we have not had and to people we have not met.

When teachers encourage students to speak out loud what they are noticing in both the illustrations and the words, they can help nurture the social imagination, as Simeen did in her invitation for students to respond to the endpages as she began her interactive read-aloud. Signaling the importance of this instructional practice, Lisa Pinkerton refers to the interactive read-aloud as the “bedrock of the literacy block.”

During interactive read-alouds, teachers invite students to share their responses throughout the read-aloud and to co-construct meaning together in response to what they are noticing, thinking, and feeling (Hoffman). By carefully selecting texts and intentionally choosing places to pause for discussion (Pinkerton), teachers often share their own thinking and model fluency as they engage as co-participants with their students in the read-aloud (Wiseman).

Simeen valued the shared meaning-making that interactive read-alouds can promote, especially as students become attuned to the aesthetic features of picturebooks and key into them in ways that promote the social imagination. As Simeen continued to share *Migrant*, she read, “But fall is here and the geese are flying away. And with them, goes Anna, like a monarch, like a robin, like a feather in the wind.” The students’ responses to this double-page spread suggested their astute attention to the words as well as the illustrations. Some repeated the similes to themselves quietly. One student drew a feather in her response journal as she listened. Interestingly, while the illustration shows Anna on a swing, appearing as light and free as the words suggest, two students actually compared her to the tree. In the following exchange, attention to the artistic elements of the picturebooks created a rich context for analysis:

Sophia: I like how the illustrator showed how she was like the tree, like she was being uprooted and moved to somewhere else.

Simeen: Mmm.

Sophia: In that picture it's like she's kind of like trying to stay back, but like her whole family, even her little sister and her brother are like waiting for her, like, waiting for her to come on.

Simeen: Hmm. “Come on.” I think she is like beckoning, right? She is saying, “Come on, come on.” What do other people think?

Kelsey: I think it's kind of showing that she's thinking of a time where she can just *be* and not have to leave.

Here, Sophia and Kelsey draw on their analysis of the illustrations and the words in the story to make meaning. Using their social imaginations, both try to imagine what Anna might be thinking, wishing for, feeling. To Sophia and Kelsey, Anna is not a stock character, but instead a multidimensional girl, infused with hopes, dreams, experiences, and desires—ones that they wish to name and to try to understand. This awakening and deepening of the social imagination resulted not only from the students' keen attention to the book's illustrations and lyrical language but also from the creation of a classroom community where students constructed knowledge together about the experiences of migrant families. Within this dynamic community, particular illustrations and certain lines of texts radiated with an energy that focused students' attention and inspired them to consider, analyze, and wonder. As a result, they not only fine-tuned their analysis of the visual and textual elements but also created meaning together about the broader social world and about one of the most salient issues of our time.

Nurturing Reading as an Act of Creativity

Within the multisensory, experiential process of aesthetic reading, Louise Rosenblatt explains that readers are actually involved in a creative act themselves, noting, “out of these ideas and feelings, a new experience, the story or poem, is shaped and lived through” (269). To become attuned to those sensory and affective experiences of the text can also further the social imagination. I had a glimpse of these creative possibilities when Krista, a literacy specialist, and her co-teacher invited their sixth-grade students to explore World War II across multiple genres. These educators chose to focus less on presenting a sizeable list of dates and events, and instead considered how the war affected children and animals. In promoting the social imagination, Krista and her co-teacher endeavored to support students' aesthetic transactions and determined that knowledge created within the affective realm would be valued in the classroom. For example, the following prompts

guided the discussion of a wide range of picture-books that students read together in pairs:

1. What Really Matters to the Main Character
2. What Surprised Me or Worried Me about This Story
3. What I Still Wonder / Questions I Still Have

When two students, Aneesa and Derek, sat down together with *Shin's Tricycle* (1995) by Tatsuharu Kodama, a book in which a father grieves the loss of his son after the bombing of Hiroshima, Aneesa mentioned how deeply the texts read in the unit had affected her, exclaiming to Derek, “When we read [*Faithful Elephants* by Yukio Tsuchiya] I felt myself in that person's, the elephant keeper's, shoes. I was like, I felt like crying in my mind. I was like, ‘Oh my God. I can't believe that!’” Derek agreed, stating that he found the book “incredibly sad.” As they went on to discuss *Shin's Tricycle*, Aneesa expressed her surprise that Shin's father would feel guilty in response to his son's death. This surprise became a springboard for both Derek and Aneesa to explore the morality of war and the responsibilities of those who pursue it, with Aneesa asking:

I wanted to add to what surprised me was why does the author feel guilty? It's not his fault. Why is he feeling guilty when other people are the ones who should be feeling guilty? They're killing these innocent people's lives. Why is he the one? That's really surprising me.

Here, Aneesa tried to enter the father's perspective, but found it difficult. Unlike her response to the elephant keeper in which she said she felt what he was feeling, here she is more perplexed. She continued to ask serious and hard questions about the ethics of war and the responsibilities of those in power:

Aneesa: But I really want to write down “*Why?*” *Why* can't the people who are

fighting in the war, why aren't *they* feeling guilty?

Derek: Well, I think they kind of feel guilty, but they had no choice.

Aneesa: But why aren't the *leaders* feeling guilty? Like the president? They're the ones that started the war.

Although it may seem like Aneesa is not able to imagine Shin's father's perspective here, I think it is more compelling to consider that she was actually grasping his grief so profoundly that she seemed to be *willing* him not to feel guilty. In addition, she's sensing that grief so strongly that she wants to accentuate the responsibilities of others, namely, those who orchestrated the war.

So much worked together here to support this powerful exchange: the intentional structuring of student-centered inquiry, the careful selection of the picturebooks, and the very purposeful language of the prompts to promote aesthetic transactions. These are not prompts that ask children to reiterate facts or to check comprehension. These are questions about readers, about people, about the human condition. These are questions that ask students to pay attention to their sensory experiences with, and emotional responses to, texts. These are prompts for cultivating the social imagination. In this intentional and careful way, Krista encouraged her students to consider deeply the experiences of individuals across the world and across time, to see how and in what ways those stories radiated with significance for their own lives.

Creating Space for Agency and Activism

In "The Arts and the Search for Social Justice," Maxine Greene proposes, "if we release our imaginations, if we allow ourselves to move out to such works, we may well find them becoming part of our lived reality." Greene suggests here

that art can actually shift our relationship to the world. She goes on to write that in response to art, "We may wonder; we may ache; we may want to refuse. But we may also ask: 'What next?' or 'What can be done?' or 'How does it affect what I make of my life?'" She describes how works of art can move us to wonder, to question, sometimes to turn away. Greene suggests that when we open ourselves to the arts, we must then grapple with the truths they speak, no matter how difficult they might be, and that we must allow ourselves to emerge transformed from our encounters with the arts.

Similarly, even while picturebooks can inspire students' appreciation for the visual arts and deep transactions with texts, they can also inspire examination into why the world is the

While picturebooks can inspire students' appreciation for the visual arts and deep transactions with texts, they can also inspire examination into why the world is the way it is and what our collective responsibilities to each other might be.

way it is and what our collective responsibilities to each other might be. In my collaborative inquiries with the teachers, I noticed that picturebooks provided students opportunities to experience a range of cultures, languages, worldviews, and perspectives and that

the students grappled with how to take in what they were learning, especially when it contrasted with their own understandings. In response to books that had a social inequality or injustice at the heart, some students were even moved to action. In these moments, students considered not only the complex nature of inequalities and injustices but also what role they might play in addressing them. In this way, picturebooks can nurture a sense of agency, or what Cynthia Lewis, Patricia Enciso, and Elizabeth Birr Moje describe as "the strategic making and remaking of selves, identities, activities, relationships, cultural tools and resources and histories" (5). Peter Johnston argues that when we teach with student agency in mind, we cultivate the possibility for "generative acts, for creativity, for problem solving in the most powerful way" (31). Picturebooks can provide ideal partners for

the kind of teaching that promotes agency and activism.

For a group of third-grade boys in Maggie’s reading support class in an urban school, reading about the work of Colombian educator Luis Soriano enlivened the social imagination and prompted them to action. The boys first read about Soriano in a short essay that was within the school’s core reading program. Maggie chose to supplement the text by also sharing *Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia*. Reading these texts that explored Soriano’s efforts to bring books to children in rural areas who had limited access to schools and libraries prompted insistent questions from the boys: Why didn’t the children have a school closer to their homes? Why did Soriano have to ride a donkey to deliver the books? What is life like in Colombia? Following their leads, Maggie searched for additional resources to share, such as more picturebooks, YouTube clips, newspaper articles, and a range of other multimedia texts.

Maggie’s students were so moved by learning about Luis Soriano that they collectively decided that they needed to take action. After doing more research, they debated many possible options and agreed to a school-wide fundraiser they called “Quarters for Colombia.” Marshaling many literacies and resources, the boys wrote emails, presented their views to their principal, created flyers, and made a presentation to their entire school. In the process, they learned about crafting their message for different audiences, experiencing firsthand how to show respect, how to identify key ideas, and how to persuade. A month later, they proudly wrote to Soriano to share the funds they raised and their support for his efforts.

I believe there is much to learn from Maggie’s students about the power of picturebooks to cultivate the social imagination. Beginning with their real questions about a text grounded in the real world, the boys pursued literacy work that had real-world significance. They

not only imagined another person’s reality but also asserted agency and asked what they could do and what others could do in response. As Patricia Enciso writes, “Imagination is not a character trait or quality, but a transformative experience, that heightens our awareness of our own and one another’s humanity” (31). The books and multimedia texts that Maggie found for the boys helped her students to imagine a different reality outside their own and then to consider how they might act to change that reality. Gay Ivey and Peter Johnston explain that within engaged reading, students participate in “conversations with book characters, with one another, and with themselves” and that these conversations reflect “the active construction of selves and of the narratives of their lives” (273). Moving beyond the limitations associated with their namesakes as “struggling readers,” Maggie’s students rewrote the narratives that were beginning to be told about them and

Picturebooks can inspire children to find their way in the world as well as to make that world a more accepting, fair, and equitable place.

instead claimed identities as international social activists. Picturebooks can inspire children to find their way in the world as well as to make that world a more

accepting, fair, and equitable place. In this way, Michael, Rakim, and Eric radiated intensity, care, and purpose as they utilized their social imaginations.

Conclusion: Reading Radiantly, Creating Possibilities

Patricia Enciso contends that stories reveal “our capacity to imagine beyond the readymade narratives of who we are; who we have been; and who we might become in our communities, schools, and global societies” (30). As I consider the vignettes I have collected in classrooms of teachers sharing books that promote the social imagination, I have learned that picturebooks can play these transformative roles. Within books that radiate truth, beauty, and courage and within readers who radiate openness, compassion, and resolve, I see teachers and students embracing hope for a better world.

Picturebooks are vital resources for providing images to young people of how individuals can respond to unjust situations and claim agency within their own worlds and the broader world (Mathis). Embracing their potential seems particularly important within this historical moment, where migrants seek refuge, where natural disasters claim lives and livelihoods, where girls and women are breaking silences long held. Here, we can turn to the arts and the imagination not as escapes from the world, but as conduits for making it better. Christopher Myers contends that artists are continually “rewriting the world around them,” explaining:

That is what all of us artists do. Perhaps the discipline it takes to rewrite a manuscript is similar to the discipline it will take to rewrite the literary landscape or to rewrite the fear and news reports, to rewrite the riots, to rewrite the boys running from bullets, to rewrite the children whose fondest wish is to go to school, or to go to school unharassed, or feel what it means to have a full belly. (“CSK”)

When incorporated intentionally, thoughtfully, and purposefully, picturebooks provide entry points for exploring the complexities of the human condition: belonging, identity, suffering, caretaking, love, loss. For some students, this entry point may be a line of dialogue reflective of a grandmother’s cadence; for still others, it may be the accumulation of images over time, across multiple books, of the experiences of child migrants, so different from themselves, yet so alike in other ways. Picturebooks can help us attune not only to the beauty in the world but also to our relationships to others, and to our responsibilities in light of social inequalities. Above all, they can cultivate the social imagination and help us imagine new possibilities for ourselves and the world. As Christopher Myers writes, “With pens and word processors, with paint and ink and collage, we can...create possibilities where there weren’t any before” (“CSK”). And, as David Kirkland reminds us, “Although

we exist in the restrictive scenes of our experiences, we live more freely in the possibilities of imagination.” Picturebooks, read radiantly and with love for the world and each other, can help us realize those possibilities.

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When the kingfisher tries to catch a giant fish that is bigger than a fox and looks like a cloud in the sky, the antelope accompanies the kingfisher on its journey in this story about the importance of supporting friends. On the last page, the kingfisher triumphantly holds the giant fish in its mouth on top of the mountain and appears to be on top of the world as his dream comes true. The animals' expressions and movements are subtle but deliver their feelings to readers well.

The entire story is illustrated in double-spread pages with vivid colors in bright tones. Young readers will be surprised to know that the author worked as a zookeeper for twenty-five years, and they will learn that the illustrations are based on his knowledge and observations of animals at the zoo. This self-taught artist is an award winner in Japan.

Jongsun Wee



Hiroshi Abe

雲をつかむはなし
[A Story of Grabbing Clouds]

Tokyo: Media Pal, 2017. 32 pp.
ISBN: 9784802130486
(Picturebook; ages 4+)

"A Girl Like Me in a Time Gone By":

Agency, Reading, and Writing in the *Our Australian Girl* Series

by MELANIE DUCKWORTH

Agency and identity are developed in young people through many means, including literacy events. The Our Australian Girl series introduces the reader to significant aspects of Australian history and cultural multiplicity while having the potential of nurturing agency development. This article explores the representations of reading and writing that run like a thread throughout the series alongside comparable acts of creation like storytelling, dancing, and drawing. Reading offers the characters of these novels a chance to understand and question their worlds, and writing offers them a chance to remake them.

As she sipped her tea, Lina thought about how incredible it was that each of those books, stacked neatly into towering piles, had a story nestled between the covers just waiting to connect with a reader, the way Anne Frank's story had connected with her. Could I write something one day that would change someone's world the way that Anne Frank's words changed mine? she wondered, caressing the cover of her new book. Without this book I may never have met Julia, or become friends with Sister Rosemary, or believed that a young person's words could possibly make



a difference. (Rippin, *The Lina Stories* 394-95)

The *Our Australian Girl* series, like the better-known *American Girl* series and the comparable *Our Canadian Girl* series, is a historical fiction series marketed at eight- to twelve-year-old girls. Published between 2011 and 2017, it consists of forty-four books, centered around eleven main characters. The books are written by some of Australia's best-loved writers for children and span "historical"

eras from 1808 to 1983. As is apparent from the title of the series itself, the books address both nationhood and girlhood and foster a sense of shared identity through relating the

experiences of girls from a variety of cultural backgrounds throughout Australian history. Agency is a key theme of the series, as the girls rise to challenges, make decisions, free themselves from limitations, help their families and friends, advocate for their cultures, and learn to articulate their world, their hopes, and their dreams. The protagonists of the *Our Australian Girl* series need to choose how to act at defining moments of Australia's cultural history: the arrival of convicts and free settlers, the gold rush, the federation of Australia and the fight to give women the vote, the First and Second World Wars, the Great Depression, and the new influx of migrants from non-European countries that began with the abolition of the White Australia policy in 1983.

At first sight, these books perfectly fit Janelle B. Mathis's call for literature that "[nurtures] a sense of agency in young learners (future citizens of a global community)" and contributes to "a more informed globalization of classrooms, providing young literacy learners with positive, authentic insights to the various global communities, insights that go beyond the media coverage of war, disaster, and poverty" (206-07). These are admirable goals. On the other hand, however, potential problems arise in the pairing of "positive" and "authentic." A certain "positivity" is expected of books for young readers, but to what extent is it acceptable for that positivity to color historical representations? Historical fiction for children has been frequently criticized for prioritizing contemporary values over historical accuracy, particularly in relation to agency. As Victoria Flanagan summarizes:

Feminism has...had a profound influence on historical fiction written for children and adolescents, prompting many children's authors to re-imagine significant historical moments from a feminine perspective....However, much of the resultant history available in this kind of historical fiction ends up distinctly "ahistorical." (29)

Anne Scott Macleod argues that when female agency is presented as too easy and successful in historical contexts, we risk condemning historical personages for *not* acting, when to act would in reality have had terrible consequences. It also blinds us to the different (if limited) ways in which women really did wield power in the past. Kim Wilson identifies the agency of young people as presenting a particular problem in historical fiction, where she sees the "concept of progress from the past" linked to the agency of young heroes (5). There is therefore a potentially troubled relationship between identity, agency, and truth in these books. Wilson is deeply critical of the way history is represented in children's literature, which she argues is invested in shaping the past in ways that confirm stereotypes of national identity. In making past worlds accessible and palatable to the modern reader, she argues that too much is lost—the actual worldviews of characters from the past tend not

I wish to argue that despite the potentially problematic pairing of "agency" and "historical truth," the series succeeds in introducing the reader to significant aspects of Australian history and cultural multiplicity, while at the same time promoting a sense of agency, purpose, and identity in the reader.

to be reproduced as they are just too different. The smooth surfaces provided by the genre and structure of the novels, and the accessible voices of the characters, gloss over the true strangeness of the past.

These criticisms of children's historical fiction can certainly be applied to the *Our Australian Girl* series, especially to the books set further back in time. However, I wish to argue that despite the potentially problematic pairing of "agency" and "historical truth," the series succeeds in introducing the reader to significant aspects of Australian history and cultural

multiplicity, while at the same time promoting a sense of agency, purpose, and identity in the reader. One of the ways it achieves this is through a focus on reading and writing. John Stephens defines agency "in the broad sense that action can transcend its material context; that is, that an individual psyche has a capacity for either self-alteration or remaking the world, in contrast to society's propensity to represent itself as always already instituted—thereby denying the possibility of creative action to individuals" (x). Writing itself is one way that action can "transcend its material context," and reading can also be a creative act. For many of the characters in the novels, the knowledge and confidence required to act with courage are acquired by reading and writing. As Mathis points out, "[s]tudies in literature have shown readers of all ages building identity, resiliency, and agency through reading experiences" (207), and the characters of these novels animate exactly this process. Representations of reading and writing run like a thread throughout the series, alongside comparable acts of creation like storytelling, dancing, and drawing. Reading offers the characters of these novels a chance to understand and question their worlds, and writing offers them a chance to remake them.

The depictions of reading and writing in these books are so pervasive as to appear a preordained theme. In Penny Matthews's *The Nellie Stories*, the Irish orphan Nellie painstakingly learns to read and ends up a schoolteacher. In Sherryl Clark's *The Rose Stories*, set in 1900, Rose hankers to read novels her upper-class mother deems only appropriate for boys. Her Aunt Alice, a suffragette, lends her *Treasure Island*. When Rose is requested to recite a poem on her birthday, she chooses "The Charge of the Light Brigade": "it was by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and had lots of action. Much better

than a soppy love poem!" (331). Thus, novels and poems form a part of her growing awareness of the changing roles available to women and enable her to stake her own place in the world. Gabrielle Wang's *The Poppy Stories*, set in 1864-66, reference *Great Expectations* and *Alice in Wonderland*, and Sally Rippin's *The Lina Stories*, set in 1956, negotiate both Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* and the iconic Australian women's magazine *Women's Weekly*. As well as providing authentic details to the representation of the time in question, these references function as embedded introductions to classic and popular literature in Australian contexts and offer portals out of the text itself to other

texts written at the time. References to reading also collapse the distance between character and reader. If a character is portrayed with a book in her hands, the reader is invited to reflect metacognitively on the book in her own.

The Book as Object

The book in the hands of the reader of the *Our Australian Girl* series is illustrated with the photograph of a young girl. She meets the reader's gaze and smiles. Before I turn to specific examples of the ways in which agency, reading, and writing are linked in the books, I want to comment on the ways in which the covers of the novels, and other aspects of their peritexts, frame their representations of history and agency. "Peritext" means "peripheral" aspects of the book that surround the text, such as illustrations (Higonnet). The portrait is scrapbooked together with a photo frame, lace, floral fabric background, photographs and drawings of objects and buildings from the time in question, and a charm bracelet that encapsulates a sense of girlhood and personal and national identity. This collection of objects makes a claim to represent authenticity, memory, and creative engagement with the past. The back



of each book contains snippets of information about the times and places in which it is set. There are also brief biographies of the author and the illustrator, under the heading "How I Became an Australian Girl." Alice Pung, for example, explains that her parents were refugees from Cambodia via Vietnam, who arrived in Australia by boat in 1980. She writes: "I was born a year later. Dad named me Alice, because he thought Australia was a wonderland" (*Meet Marly*). The biographies are an appealing addition to the series' representation of agency and identity: the authors and illustrator are Australian "girls" who have produced books and integrated a variety of cultural backgrounds into a sense of being Australian.

The girls portrayed on the covers are ordinary Australian schoolgirls dressed as the characters of the novels. These girls were also invited to "workshop" the novels: they listened to early versions of the manuscripts and answered questionnaires about the parts they liked, or found boring, or thought needed more or less historical information (Bell, private email). Wang dedicates the Poppy stories to "Yullarah—the beautiful face of Poppy." Penny Matthews thanked Ruby Mills for appearing on the covers of the Ruby books, and said she saw her in her mind when she wrote (Bell, "A Celebration"). There is even a video on the *Our Australian Girl* website where you can see several of the "cover girls" discussing the books. The inclusion of contemporary girls as the faces of historical characters underlines the message of connectivity with the past and offers the girls involved a sense of ownership, participation, and even agency.

One limitation of the packaging of these books is that it could tend to exclude young male readers. The stories themselves could appeal just as much to boys, but the floral, lacy covers and the title of the series provide a barrier.

A spin-off series, *Do You Dare*, is marketed at boys, with boy protagonists. This series is more limited, however, with just one novel per

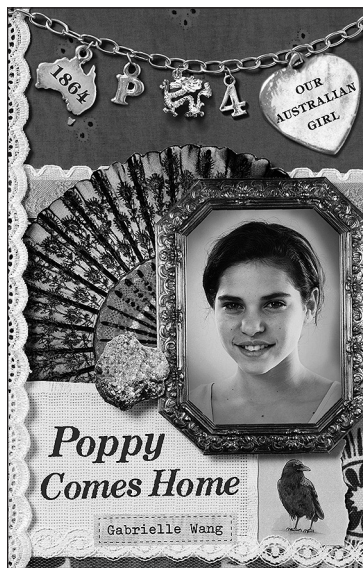
The inclusion of contemporary girls as the faces of historical characters underlines the message of connectivity with the past and offers the girls involved a sense of ownership, participation, and even agency.

time period instead of four interlinked stories. Several of the same authors are involved, but they are identified by initials instead of their names, hiding their gender. Agency is portrayed very differently on the "girl" and "boy" covers.

The most prominent things on the girl covers are the girl's name and her photograph. All this is missing from the "boy" books, which feature the year in block capitals, plus a shadowy silhouette of an adventure or action scene. The title of the series, *Do You Dare*, is a direct call to action. Like the readers of the *Our Australian Girl* books, the readers are invited to reflect on what their own lives would have been like at a historical moment. They are visually, however, thrown straight into the action. On the "boy" covers, the characters are presented

as moving, not still, and are engrossed in their own world instead of meeting the photographer's gaze. "Action" is the first thing you see, unlike the "girl" covers, where the agency of the main character is presented as "relational" and is visually filtered through a friendly smile and a collection of objects. The differences in the gendered representations of agency between these two series would be an interesting topic for further study.

The peritext of the *Our Australian Girl* series



is extensive but is in no way comparable to the branding and merchandising associated with the *American Girl* series. The *American Girl* books, which are sold alongside an expensive range of dolls and accessories, have been criticized for being historically inaccurate and for cultivating a shallow and materialistic notion of girlhood (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel; Hade; Marshall). The stories of the girls themselves are secondary to the elaborate "historical" accessories one can acquire for them. The *Our Canadian Girl* series, like the *Our Australian Girl* series, is, by contrast, not associated with a range of toys. Marnina Gonick shows that the Canadian series is much more interested in social justice issues than its American counterpart, but despite this, she argues that it promotes a neoliberal notion of girlhood, which proposes simplistic solutions to complex problems. She explains:

What is most interesting in the relationship between readers and texts such as the *Our Canadian Girl* series...lies not in the overt, rational, or historic lessons presented, but in the detailed understanding of what it means to be a certain kind of gendered, raced, and national subject that underpins the morality of the stories. (267)

Her key reservations about the series again hinge on agency. While the series draws attention to issues such as racism, slavery, and inequality, in the narrative arcs of the novels themselves the problems are solved too easily by the personal initiatives of the main characters. Gonick blames this on an underlying assumption of neoliberal individualism, where complex, structural problems are seen to be fixable by "individualized solutions and individual merit" (279). She suggests that, like the *American Girl* series, the *Our Canadian Girl* series presents an "ahistorical" notion of girlhood, in which the values and personalities of girls are depicted as unchanging throughout the centuries. A similar "ahistoric" notion of girlhood is apparent in the *Our Australian Girl* series, as evident both in the cover photographs and in

its catchphrase: "a girl like me in a time gone by." This phrase both romanticizes the past and presents the historical girl characters as intrinsically similar to the projected girl readers.

Reading and Journeys in Nineteenth-Century Australia: Part 1—*The Grace Stories*

I will now focus on two sets of *Our Australian Girl* stories set in the nineteenth century to show how their pairing of reading and agency contributes to the creation of a sense of belonging in Australia and becomes a method of negotiating and claiming a range of multicultural identities. At the beginning of each *Our Australian Girl* story, the main character faces obstacles to her freedom or her self-expression. In the books set in more recent times, these obstacles take the form of parental expectations and schoolyard racism, but in the earlier books they are even more challenging. In Sofie Laguna's *The Grace Stories*, Grace is an orphan trapped in crippling poverty in 1808 London, and in *The Poppy Stories*, Poppy is a Chinese Aboriginal girl imprisoned on an Aboriginal mission in 1864. For both girls, reading or storytelling provide hope and a vision of a future that inspire and enable their agency within the texts.

As Mathis points out, "Social Enactment Theory says that agency is realized within limits and that an individual's choices reinforce or transform those limits over time" (207). Grace's limits at the beginning of her stories are narrow indeed. She subsists by working as a "mudlark" on the Thames river, digging around in the mud for items to sell. She lives with her verbally abusive uncle, who spends most of her earnings on drink. She can no longer bear her uncle's anger and cruelty, or the bullies who threaten her on the river, so she decides to sleep and seek her living on the streets of London. While this is not much of a choice, it is a choice and she makes it. She then steals an apple for herself and three apples to give to a cab horse she loves. Accused of stealing not only the apples but the horse, she ends up in Newgate prison. Fortunately, the judge takes pity on her when he realizes her crime was an act of kindness, and instead

of being hanged, she is shipped to Australia. It is thus her delirious act of kindness toward a horse that precipitates her new life.

Grace is illiterate, so reading is relegated to the edges of this narrative. Storytelling, however, plays a strong role. A gypsy woman tells her that the cab horse she loves to stroke is her Pegasus: "'That's your horse, that is,' the woman continued. 'Pegasus. Like the one in the old stories, the one that could fly over the world to where thunder is made'" (23). This story provides something for Grace to hold on to: it inspires her to care for the horse, who in a strange way is responsible for her journey to the other side of the world. On the ship, Grace makes friends with another girl, Hannah, whose exuberant stories keep their spirits up and give them hope for the journey ahead. As Grace is rowed out with the other female convicts to the ship that will take them to Australia, one woman is able to read the name of the boat:

As they came closer to the ship, one of the prisoners said, "Ladies, did you read the name of your new home? In-dis-pens-able."

The woman sounded clever to Grace, as though she had been taught to read in a school.

"Anyone know what that means, ladies? Indispensable? I'll tell you. It means important—necessary. They think more of their boats than they do of us! We, ladies, are what is known as dispensable. Nobody gives two hoots what happens to us." (85)

Grace, and poor Pegasus, she realizes, are seen as dispensable. This changes, however, in Australia, where through time, courage, and (substantial) good fortune, Grace ends up with a family and a horse of her own. At the end of the

story, Hannah and Grace even learn to read and write, and Hannah writes her fabulous stories down. The story of Grace and Pegasus turns out to be indispensable too.

The Grace Stories demonstrate two kinds of "reading." First, Grace embraces the story of Pegasus as a marker of hope and a promise of a new and better future, a promise that is fulfilled at the end of the narrative. In this way she accepts and absorbs the story, and it becomes a foundational part of herself, functioning as a myth that legitimizes her re-placement in Australia. A second form of reading—a more critical one—is performed by the woman on the boat. She reads the name of the ship ironically, only to reject it. Grace and Hannah are able to prove that story wrong—they will write new stories, wonderful stories, out of the scraps that Great Britain rejects. The cozy positivity of the latter part of this narrative, however, downplays the hardships of colonial life in Australia. Not all female convicts could expect to be adopted into a happy family. Grace has some interactions with a local Aboriginal woman, who helps her heal a horse who has become ill. There is

no sense, however, that Grace's new stories are erasing older stories, or that her good fortune comes at the expense of the homes and lives of the people who were there before she arrived.

Reading and Journeys in Nineteenth-Century Australia: Part 2—*The Poppy Stories*

The Poppy Stories are written by Gabrielle Wang, a Chinese Australian best known for her magical-realist depictions of Chinese Australian children, such as *The Garden of Empress Cassia*. She also wrote *The Pearlie Stories*, set in 1946. Her historical narratives are inflected by "magical" elements culturally significant to the characters she has created: Poppy's Aboriginal mother watches over her in the form of a crow, and



Pearlie helps her friend Naoko deal with a ghost, a skill she has learned from her Chinese father. Wang’s protagonists are Asian Australians, and they happily reverse a previous trend of characters from ethnic minorities having only minor roles in Australian children’s literature, usually written by white Australians. *The Poppy Stories* are set at the time of the gold rush, and Wang bases one of the characters on her great-grandfather, who as stated on the back cover “came over to the Victorian gold fields from Guangdong, China, in the 1850s.” They tell the story of a Chinese Aboriginal girl who escapes from an orphanage and journeys across Australia to reunite with her brother and father. As is now standard practice (Bradford, “Oh How Different” 208), Wang consulted an Indigenous elder and liaison officer about her depiction of Poppy. The story draws attention to the inhumane practice of incarcerating Aboriginal children away from their families and culture, as well as depicting the cultural presence of the Chinese at this pivotal point of Australian history.

The text is brimful of depictions of reading—some more convincing than others. For Poppy, reading is always a positive thing, a way she can navigate and claim her various cultural identities. Poppy, whose Aboriginal name is Kalinya, speaks, reads, and writes English, as well as a special code she develops with her brother, using animals as mnemonics. She relishes opportunities to spend time in the mission library, where she enjoys an encyclopedia called *The Book of Knowledge*, which provides most of her information about the outside world. Later she discovers *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. When she decides to escape from the mission, her great adventure begins with a decision to withhold her voice—she demonstrates agency not by speaking but by remaining silent:

Poppy nodded. Mother Hangtree played the introduction. But nobody could have guessed what followed. There was complete silence. Instead of singing her solo, Poppy looked blankly ahead, keeping her mouth firmly shut. (43)

Poppy refuses to sing to impress the government visitors to the mission, and when she is locked in the basement for punishment, she is able to escape dressed as a boy and begin her journey to reunite with her brother at the goldfields. Throughout the narrative, Poppy’s singing voice remains a marker of her agency and identity. At the Aboriginal camp, “[w]henever Poppy sang, everyone would stop what they were doing, lift their heads and listen attentively” (302). Later, when she dresses up as an “Indian princess” and sings her Bellbird song with nonsense words for a dubious traveling salesman, things begin to go badly wrong. Her voice and her cultural identities are not for sale.

Poppy is given a Chinese letter she is unable to read but that ultimately helps her reunite with her father. She also meets up with a group of Aboriginals along the way, who begin to teach her about her own culture. This provides her with a new kind of “knowing”: “It wasn’t the same as reading from *The Book of Knowledge*. This knowing could never be forgotten for it lay nestled inside her heart, warm and safe, like a possum wrapped snug in its nest of leaves” (187).

The fire, the stories, the songs—these were the things she longed for, had dreamed about. It was as if she was born with a book inside her, a memory of a long time ago on each page. It was as if the animals, the rocks, the trees, the mountains held these stories inside them, too. They had been whispering to her since the time she was born. (303)

Like her Chinese heritage, Poppy’s Indigenous heritage requires a different sort of “reading.” Poppy’s adventurous journey, coupled with her command of reading and writing in English and the positioning of Aboriginal knowledge as equal in significance and sophistication, completely reverses the way in which Aboriginals were depicted in nineteenth-century Australian children’s literature. In this literature, Aboriginals were presented as subhuman, girls did not have adventures, Aboriginal knowledge was deemed inferior, and the command of written texts was

reserved for white people (Bradford, "Saved" 90). For Poppy, agency and a multicultural, multifaceted literacy are connected.

The text thus entwines multiple strands of reading and performing cultural identities. That Poppy's "favorite" novel is *Great Expectations* is a little contrived, as is the kindness with which she is treated by the bookshop owner, Mr. Audwinkle, who lends her books like *Moby Dick* to read, and who suggests she might like

For Poppy, agency and a multicultural, multifaceted literacy are connected. The text thus entwines multiple strands of reading and performing cultural identities.

to review Australia's very first copy of *Alice in Wonderland*. It is unlikely that these texts would have been fully comprehensible to her, despite her education and colonization at the orphanage. Sharyn Pearce claims that Nadia Wheatley's *A Banner Bold*, set like *The Poppy Stories* in the time of the gold rush, "white-washes" history by ignoring "ugly outbreaks of racial violence" and the "overriding concern for racial purity at this time" (240). The same charge could be made against *The Poppy Stories* themselves, which sometimes reference racism and genocide, but other times bypass them. Poppy witnesses white people shooting at Aboriginals as if they are dogs (118), and her Aboriginal mentor Tom confirms that many are killed, but all the people she encounters in person survive, and the majority of her own encounters with strangers are friendly ones. Overall, however, Poppy's story is an ambitious and cleverly executed multicultural adventure story that addresses issues of identity and belonging pertinent to the present day, while imagining a new way of thinking about the past.

The Lina Stories and The Marly Stories: Reading and Remaking Identities in Twentieth-Century Australia

The topics of reading, agency, and multicultural identity explored in *The Poppy Stories* are revisited in the twentieth-century *Our Australian Girl* narratives. Reading and writing feature in all the *Our Australian Girl* books to varying extents, but it is in Sally Rippin's *The Lina Stories* that they receive their fullest treatment. Lina is an aspiring journalist, and through her writing she finds solace, a voice, and a way to transform her world. She is a scholarship student at a prestigious girls' school, and writing about her Italian family helps her overcome embarrassment over her parents' poor English. It is 1956, and the Olympic Games are being held in Melbourne. When her friend John confides that he is planning to send a letter to the Olympic committee, Lina is initially dismissive: "I just don't see how a group of adults would listen to a kid. Adults never listen to kids" (263). This time, however, they do.

In 1956, John Ian Wing, a seventeen-year-old Australian boy of Chinese heritage, wrote a letter to the Olympic committee hosting the Olympic Games in Melbourne. Disturbed by fighting around the world, which was impacting the peacefulness of the games, he suggested that the athletes walk together in the closing ceremony to represent peace and togetherness, instead of marching in their national groups as they had every year before. The letter was anonymous, in crayon, and contained spelling mistakes, but amazingly, the committee agreed, and the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games has reflected this ever since. A letter from a young person changed the world. By working this true event into *The Lina Stories*, Sally Rippin epitomizes the values of the *Our Australian Girl* series: hope, multiculturalism, the agency of children, and the power of words. Lina herself is inspired by *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, given to her by her school librarian. She starts a school magazine and finds true friendship when she discovers and begins to connect with other girls from ethnic minorities. For Lina, reading and writing really do change things.

One of the most satisfying depictions of a form of "reading," or, in this case, creative "misreading," is to be found in Alice Pung's

Marly Stories, set in 1983. When Marly and her family arrived in Australia as refugees from Vietnam, the song “I Want You Back” by the Jackson 5 was often on the radio, and the announcer always named the members of the band: “Michael, Marlon, Tito, Jermaine, Jacky and Randy” (“Meet Marly” 41).

It was one of the strangest, most beautiful and exciting songs Marly had ever heard....Her father had suggested Marlin as a good Australian name for her because he thought that was what the girl in Jackson 5 was called, and it also sounded a lot like her real name, MyLinh. Marly loved it. It was only much later that she’d found out all the Jackson 5 were boys. Even worse, the name Marlin was actually spelt “Marlon”! (“Meet Marly” 40-41)

Marly is embarrassed by this mistake, but it doesn’t quell her admiration for Michael Jackson, and later she is proud to own her name. In the final book of the series, *Marly Walks on the Moon*, Marly performs a version of Michael Jackson’s “moonwalk,” with the aid of her grandmother’s embroidered slippers, which slide perfectly along the shower curtain her mother had used to partition their lounge room when her cousins stayed with them. Her “reading” and performing of this song enable her to integrate her Vietnamese and Australian identities and combat the racism she experiences at school.

Conclusion

The series successfully negotiates Australia’s multicultural heritage, touching upon the racism experienced by each successive wave of migrants and the Indigenous population. The cultural heritage of the protagonists of the books include Aboriginal, Chinese, English, Irish, Italian, and Vietnamese. Other cultures represented by friends of the protagonists include German, Polish, Egyptian, and Japanese. The series is particularly successful at documenting a Chinese presence in Australia from the days

of the goldfields to the 1980s. These novels use historical settings to tell modern stories of agency and belonging. By drawing attention to the ways in which the characters themselves read and write, negotiate texts and produce them, these texts demonstrate a measure of self-reflexivity. As Bronwyn Davies points out, “Listening and reading are, at one and the same time, acts of cultural submission and intensely personal and active acts” (154):

In relation to children’s stories, the written and illustrated text can be understood as a disciplining force—a means of creating the coherence and consistency of a culture. At the same time story is magical, and the reading of it may open up for the child horizons previously unimagined. Or more correctly, in engaging with text, the child may open up for herself or himself horizons previously unimagined. (154)

The version of “agency” encouraged by these texts is closely tied to creativity. In their biographical notes, the authors and illustrator present themselves as “Australian girls” who find joy in writing and making stories. The *Our Australian Girl* books espouse an intimate relationship between identity, creativity, passion, love, and action in the world. Agency does not

Agency does not simply mean taking risks and making changes—it means listening to one’s inner voice; it means love; sometimes, it means joy.

simply mean taking risks and making changes—it means listening to one’s inner voice; it means love; sometimes, it means joy. The quirky and effervescent *Alice Stories* (1918) by Davina Bell make this point most clearly. Alice feels that due to the hardships of the Great War, she should give up her beloved ballet dancing and focus on community-sanctioned ways of assisting the

war effort. Ultimately, however, her dancing is the only thing capable of reuniting her family and restoring her brother Teddy to health. After the horrors he has experienced in the war, he cannot bear to paint, but in the final paragraph of the novels, he paints Alice:

There, on his lap, was the most glorious thing Alice had ever seen. It was Teddy's special tin of oil paints, shining like a box of magic. In his fingers was a paintbrush, more thrilling to Alice than if it had been a real wand. And on the paper in front of him, in a thousand perfect tiny dots, was Alice, looking up to heaven, dancing against the wide, bright sky. (441)

This final image perfectly sums up the ideals of the novels: an Australian girl, doing the thing she loves best, dancing against the bright Australian sky. It suggests that true agency, the kind that helps others, is to be found not in abstaining from joy and personal talent, but in embracing them.

The story arcs of the novels are triumphant. The girls realize their dreams and at the end of each narrative are safely ensconced within nuclear families (or approximations of them) that respect and support their talents and their

The focus on agency, reading, and writing creates something quite special: a sense of possibility. This sense of possibility is not lost in the past, nor is it hidden in some unassailable future. It is right here, right now: a book with a story nestled inside, and an empty page on which to start a new one.

capacity for agency. They have the resources available to express and develop their identities, negotiate friendships, help their communities, and pursue their goals. In the face of such

overwhelming positivity, it is fair to ask whether the series whitewashes (or pinkwashes) history. Sometimes it does. But I would argue that there are enough clues and hints to the darker aspects of Australian history to encourage further exploration. The focus on agency, reading, and writing creates something quite special: a sense of possibility. This sense of possibility is not lost in the past, nor is it hidden in some unassailable future. It is right here, right now: a book with a story nestled inside, and an empty page on which to start a new one.

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When Child Is the Father of Man:

Contesting Meanings of Childhood and Adulthood in the Fairy Tale Collections of Colonial Bengal

by SARANI ROY

This article explores how the binary of the righteous/rational/dependable/intelligent parent (or more specifically, the father) and the disobedient/unreasonable/undisciplined child in dire need of guidance came to be overturned in the Bengali fairy tale collections of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This reversal was an effect of the countercultural expressions of anticolonial nationalism.

The modern idea of culture is predicated on a suppression of the child to promote values like growth, development, and maturity: qualities believed to be the salient features of adulthood. Ashish Nandy reminds us that in the process of growing up in this culture, “we have already negatively estimated the child as an inferior version of the adult—as a lovable, spontaneous, delicate being who is also simultaneously dependent, unreliable, willful and succourant and, therefore as someone who needs to be guided, protected and educated as a ward” (“Reconstructing Childhood” 359). The location of the child in a literary text often creates a problematic and ambivalent site, as it becomes a paradigm for reconsidering existing power relations. The figure of the child problematizes and relativizes the ideas of “smallness” and “bigness” and redefines the binaries of the mature and the immature, the developed and the undeveloped in multiple ways. Texts that are aware of the immense possibilities of using the child figure to explore the nuances of

the idea of power question the apparent powerlessness associated with the figure of the child. In the Bengali fairy tale collections of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new generation child-hero was used as a critique of the older generation and its traditional way of life, contributing to the imagining of a new age and a new nation.

The figure of the child problematizes and relativizes the ideas of “smallness” and “bigness” and redefines the binaries of the mature and the immature, the developed and the undeveloped in multiple ways.

Colonial Imaginings of Childhood and Adulthood

The authoritative connotation of adulthood

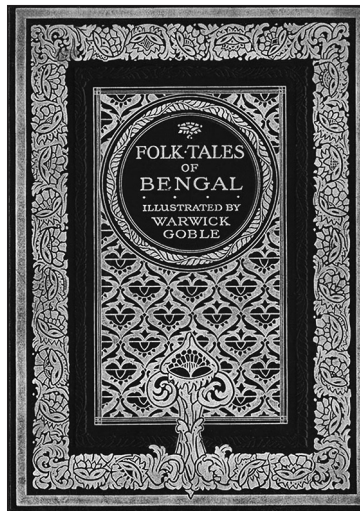
is a product of the Enlightenment discourse of modernity. As adulthood is thought to be a successive stage in the process of growth and development of an individual, so is Enlightenment in the development of a culture. As

In the Bengali fairy tale collections of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new generation child-hero was used as a critique of the older generation and its traditional way of life, contributing to the imagining of a new age and a new nation.

adulthood is structurally preceded by childhood, enlightenment is preceded by darkness. Enlightenment's valorization of attaining timely adulthood is basically a project of self-aggrandizement, where the emancipation of the "self" is dependent on a strategic and systematic negation of a series of others—the racial other, the gendered other, and the child other. Reason and rationality are the hallmarks of this concept: "The task of ridding one's mind of superstition and prejudice is sometimes described by Enlightenment writers as a kind of growing up, as an intellectual coming of age.... Although references to growth and maturity successfully convey an increasing confidence and optimism about human reason, in relegating entire cultures or historical periods to the 'childhood' of humanity, they also promote a misleading view of human history and achievement" (Deligiorgi 59).

According to Kant, the ultimate spokesman of the European Enlightenment, immaturity is not the absence of reason but the inability to use it independently. Kant argues that immaturity is

a "self-imposed" handicap because it is not the result of a lack of understanding, but rather of a "lack of resolve and courage to use it without the guidance from another" (41). Kant quickly deciphers the reasons behind the state of immaturity: "laziness" and "cowardice" are the main hindrances in the way of attaining maturity and adulthood. He also subtly talks about an unequal race of mankind, which started off at the same point, but now is led by those who have been able to establish themselves as the guardians of those who have gladly embraced their immaturity (41). Kant makes it evident that an environment of dependence is antagonistic to the attainment of maturity and enlightenment (41-44). The European imperialist rhetoric of the White Man's Burden seems to be predicated upon a selective appropriation of Kant's argument. It takes up parts of the Kantian logic in defining the people of the Indian subcontinent as "lazy" and "coward[ly]," lacking in physical fitness, enterprise, and courage, consequently labeling them as "immature." But Kant's dictum "that the public should enlighten itself; *indeed, if it is only allowed freedom, enlightenment is almost inevitable*" (41-42; my emphasis) holds little meaning in the British colonial political scheming.



The colonial experience endowed the colonized with a sense of being incomplete in more than one way and at the same time presented them with a peculiar vision of completeness to be achieved, provided obedience to the colonial rulers is ensured. This notion of completeness is almost synonymous with the promise of modernity in a typical colonial situation. The project of modernity is sold in the colonies on the very pretext that it has been already successfully implemented "somewhere else"—actually nowhere else but at the imperial center. The most pronounced form of incompleteness that was ascribed to the Indians was that they were childlike and had not yet

grown up: “Much of the pull of the ideology of colonialism and much of the power of the idea of modernity can be traced to the evolutionary implications of the concept of the child in the Western world-view” (Nandy, “Reconstructing Childhood” 360).

Since the entire infantilizing colonial rhetoric rested upon an equation of the less developed and consequently the childlike, it became imperative for the British to identify the causes of that lack of development, and the reasons according to them were absence of physical fitness and energy, reluctance to do hard work, and also a lack of resistance. This stereotyping was especially focused on the Bengali man, resulting on the one hand in a supposed loss of his manhood that rendered him effeminate, and on the other hand in an extreme infantilization of him. Thus, to British eyes there was no real “man” in the colony; men were either feminine or childlike. According to Ashish Nandy, European imperialism is predicated upon a marginalization of childhood, old age, femininity, and the colored races of the world. He rightly suggests that “[i]t was this postulate which came to the fore in Europe’s new ideology of male adulthood, completing the picture of a world where only the adult-male reflected a reasonable approximation of a perfect human being” (*Intimate Enemy* 16).

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Subverting the Colonial Child-Adult Binary

Countering the hyperrational and overtly masculine idea of adulthood, Bengali intellectuals of the nineteenth century invested themselves in reclaiming childhood as a source of

alternative political power. To constructively critique this imperialist ideology of adulthood, the subversive power of childhood had to be reinstated. For Bengali intellectuals, childhood stood for the promise of a new dawn and adulthood symbolized an old, dilapidated system of oppression and exploitation. Childhood came to be identified as the most contested domain in the making of a new cultural identity, which interacted with both colonialist and nationalist sets of ideologies. According to Satadru Sen,

Childhood was an important ingredient in the making of race and nationhood, at a time when new meanings were attached to perceived distinctions between white and black children, girl and boy children, aristocratic and middle class children, westernized and “authentic” children and between the offspring of the elite and those of the poor and provincial. (2)

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It is no coincidence that the Bhadrakol intellectuals of colonial Bengal traversed through the interior parts of rural Bengal with unprecedented urgency in order to find and retrieve oral tales.

ded urgency in order to find and retrieve oral tales. The project of collecting the folk and fairy tales became operative as a part of the agenda of spreading a cultural-nationalist consciousness in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Bengal. Central to the creation of a historical narrative, is the question of progress from an oral, illiterate culture to a literate and written one. Since the narrative of modernity came to be triggered in India under the colonial rule, it was most convenient for the nationalists to project the premodern and consequently the

authentically Indian in the oral or the popular or the non-written. As a result, the fairy tale collections in question came to be deeply implicated in the discourse of building a new national identity for India.

We need to remember, of course, that the act of connecting the oral and the folk with the indigenous and the national culture was itself a Western import. The history of folklore can be traced back to the early nineteenth-century romantic-nationalist movement in Germany, to the Grimm brothers and their international influence. Even in India, the tradition of collecting regional tales to publish them in book forms was led by British administrators turned ethnographers and by some of their close relatives. Mary Frere's *Old Deccan Days or Hindu Fairy Legends Current in South India* (1868), Richard Temple's *Legends of Punjab* (1884), and William Crookes's *North Indian Notes and Queries* (1895) are some of the pioneering works in this genre. Even Lal Behari Day, who takes a considerably different approach in framing his collection from that of the strongly nationalist vein of writing, openly acknowledges his debt to Richard Carnal Temple, the man recognizable for his association with the rise of the discipline of anthropology and the scientific study of folklore in India.

Sudhir Kakar expounds the pivotal role of the child in determining the cultural imagination of the Indian subcontinent. He argues that “[t]he conflict between the rejecting and fostering attitudes towards the child, so marked in the western tradition and which perhaps provides it with its evolutionary impetus, is simply not a feature of the Indian tradition” (210). Going much beyond the idealistic and semireligious parameters of the Wordsworthian claim that *the child is the father of man*, Indian consciousness has almost literalized the potential of the child. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the two most representative texts of the Indian way of life and thought, prove this point. It is in contrast to an unjust and morally weak father like Dasharatha that Ram emerges as the ideal son and the almost perfect human being. And in the *Mahabharata*, it is

the legendary valor and prowess of the young Kaurava and Pandava brothers that replace the shameful histories of the older generation's moral weakness and administrative incompetence. The Bhadrakol intellectuals of colonial Bengal, those who edited the fairy tale collections discussed here, were intelligent enough to

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The fairy tales we discuss are claimed to have an oral origin and are believed to be in circulation from time immemorial. We focus on collections of fairy tales that were published in edited volumes during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. We read stories from collections like *Folk Tales of Bengal* (1883) by Lal Behari Day, *Thakurmar Jhuli [The Grandmother's Bag of Tales]* (1907) and *Bongoponyasa Thakurdadar Jhuli [Grandfather's Bag of Tales]* (1909) by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar, and *Thakurmar Jhola [The Grandmother's Sack of Stories]* (1918) by Satyacharan Chakrabarty. The aim is to understand how the binary of the righteous/rational/dependable/intelligent parent (more specifically, the father) and the disobedient/unreasonable/undisciplined child came to be overturned in the Bengali fairy tales of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But, if these were old, traditional, oral stories, how could we claim that they presented a new perception of childhood and adulthood? This seeming contradiction is

an effect of what Bernhard Dahm has called the reconstruction of tradition. Making a point of departure from Eric Hobsbawm's much debated idea of the invention of tradition, which says that new traditions are created under the garb of antiquity to suit political purposes, Dahm argues that in times of crisis and upheaval, such as the colonial encounter, people appropriate aspects of their already existing traditional culture to make a claim for an autonomous identity (17-18).

The Bengali fairy tales represent two generations of the royal household; the older generation is exemplified by the king, while the younger generation starts with the birth of his son, the prince, and sometimes a daughter too. The second generation of the royal family is to be essentially distinguished from the first generation. The king in the fairy tales is the prototype of the "weak, lazy, and lethargic man," the entire point of the collected fairy tales being to question the competence of those who belong to an older generation. The king comes to resemble the much talked-about Bengali baboo. The satirized self-representation of the *baboo* showed an effeminate self that had lost its autonomy and willingly embraced its chains, primarily because it believed that it could not compete with the prowess of the colonizer. According to Tanika Sarkar, "The feeble Bengali male physique became a metaphor for a larger condition...[and] it was a site of the critique of the ravaging effects of colonial rule.... It was the visible site of surrender and loss, of defeat and alien discipline" (202). As opposed to this self-defeating older generation, the young prince-heroes are presented as undoubtedly fit individuals, who can undertake a lot of physical pain in order to achieve their goals. Their childhood is mostly spent outside the royal palace, away from the unhealthy sumptuous meals and the luxurious abundance of the palace. The fairy tales appealed so much to their audience perhaps because they contested the dominant orientalist stereotypes of effeminate Bengali who are permanently fearful of battle, drowned in sensuality, incapable of energetic action; at the time, there was a need for a genre that would

emphasize heroic action, conquest of enemies, and the establishment of order.

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Whenever there is a birth in the story, the child seems to be born with a very definitive purpose to fulfill, like bringing home justice for the helpless mother, reuniting the broken family, or defeating the national enemy. The fairy tale hero's exact age remains vague in the narrative. There is no documentation of his childhood years. We never find him simply playing, or blabbering, or indulging in any childish activity. He always talks and acts very reasonably. He has very strong moral standards. He knows who is good and who is bad, so he allies with the "good" forces and fights the "bad" forces. He falls in love, enters his adulthood, and finally marries. It is almost ironic when we call him a child because his ways are far more adult than those of the real adults in the story. But that is precisely the point of the story: the young hero's maturity is used as a critique of the obvious immaturities of the king or the father. The fairy tales seem to emphasize that his being young in age, or even short in height, does not make him any less of a hero.

A classic example of this is the story "*Derangule*" or "The One and the Half Fingers Tall" from *Thakurmar Jhuli*. Being born unusually short and underdeveloped, the hero is rejected by both of his parents, despite the fact that the parents are themselves responsible for the birth of this "abnormal" child. The father forgets to caution the mother not to discard any part of the cucumber prescribed by the holy man to his wife for conceiving a child. The mother, unaware of the caution, peels off the skin of

the cucumber and then eats it. As a result, she gives birth to a son who is only one and a half fingers tall. The father fails on multiple levels. The holy man's assistance is sought in the first place because the father is impotent. His biological failure is extended to both his intellectual failure, as he forgets to pass on important information to his wife, and most importantly to his moral failure, when he abandons his wife and newborn child and leaves home just because he does not want to face public humiliation.

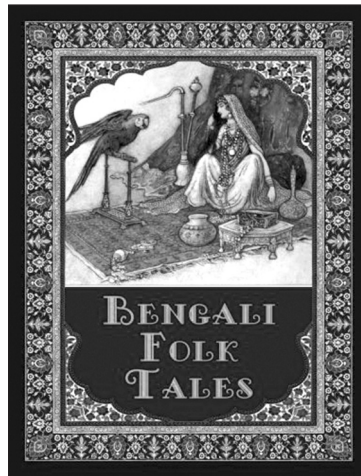
On the other hand, the one-and-a-half-fingers-long child immediately takes up the responsibility of reuniting the family. Right after his birth, he stops his mother from committing suicide out of extreme desperation at her husband's departure and convinces her to try to bring his father back home (210-11). The story is exceedingly dark in its portrayal of an adult world devoid of human emotions. And the forced happy ending to the story, where the child Derangule succeeds in bringing home his father, after a long period of trial, fails to veil the wounds already created. The character of Derangule thoroughly destabilizes the notions of who is big and who is small, who is elder and who is younger; it brings out the flawed ways of seeing in which things and beings are judged superficially.

It is often the case that the prince's upbringing is responsible for many of the differences he has from the king. The very fact that the prince, despite being born with a silver spoon in his mouth, is exposed to a life of hardship and is many times forced to do manual labor, endows him with qualities markedly absent in his lethargic father, like resilience, endurance, and sensitivity.

The king's passivity is demonstrated in a number of ways in the stories, including his impotence, his lack of reasoning abilities, and the suspension of all his powers. There are two

aspects in the representation of the king; the one is his physical passivity and the other is his mental passivity or lack of reasoning abilities. The most obvious way in which the king's moral impairment and structural passivity is hinted at is by making him impotent in most of the stories. The idea of male impotency is somewhat unique to these tales, where the shame of being childless is assigned to the king instead of the more common practice of accusing and excommunicating the woman. The stories of "Madhumala," "Pushpamala," and "Malanchamala" from *Bongoponyasa Thakurdadar Jhuli* open with the king's bereavement for not having a child. In "Madhumala" he is called "antkunde," the Bengali word for "impotent" where the gender is identified as masculine (Basu 48), and he is shown to be living a life of humiliation and depravity for not being able to produce an heir; even the sweeper has the audacity to dismiss the king for being impotent.

On the other hand, the king's mental/intellectual numbness is depicted through a representation of his lack of prudence and reasoning abilities. He is someone who can be easily fooled, as he believes in whatever is said to him, without verifying it first. In "Princess Kalavati" (the first story of *Thakurmar Jhuli*), the king is easily tricked into believing that two of his queens are at fault for having given birth to a monkey and an owl, respectively; he is unable to discern the conspiracy of the other queens in depriving them of the juice of the magical herb prescribed by the holy man. Even when he comes to realize the gravity of his mistake, he does nothing except for shedding tears. In the story titled "Ghumontopuri" ["The Palace of Sleep"], the worthlessness of the king is literalized. It is called the Palace of Sleep because the entire palace has been put to sleep under the magic spell of some giant. And, the king has been turned into a stone statue while being



seated on his throne. This is a symbolic representation of the nonfunctionality of the throne, the seat of power and control. The statue is a mockery of kingship, as the king has miserably failed to protect his kingdom.

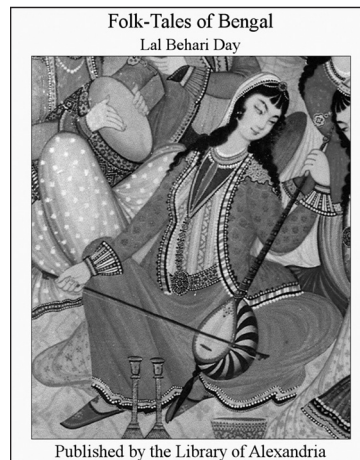
Apart from being unwise, the king also at times appears to be extremely mean and inconsiderate. In “Kankanmala Kanchanmala,” for example, the king is disloyal as he breaks a promise made to his friend, the shepherd, and ill-treats him; his lust for power corrupts him. In the story “ParabatKumar” [“The Pigeon-Prince”] from *Thakurmar Jhola*, we have a dumb and vulnerable king, who has come to the forest to demonstrate his masculine valor by taming and hunting wild animals, but ironically falls prey to the seductive charms of a beautiful witch. His sexual transgression threatens the sanctity of his home and the well-being of his wife and children.

As opposed to the narrative of the polygamous father and the perpetually insecure and anxious mother, whose childlessness is a symptom of their loveless marriage, the prince’s monogamous love for the heroine sanctions his moral authority. He is shown to be resolutely constant in his love and is ready to take any kind of risk to protect her. Though the girl is often a trophy to be awarded to the hero at his victory, yet the narrative ensures that she is free to choose. Even in a story like “Ghumontopuri,” in which the king promises to give his kingdom and his daughter to the prince (who has saved the kingdom), the marriage is not imposed; the princess has already fallen in love with the prince.

In “Princess Kalavati,” although Kalavati reluctantly marries a monkey, it is she who burns her husband’s monkey skin and thereby reveals his new, handsome look. We are left with no doubt that it is ultimately her conscious intervention that gives a new identity to her husband the prince, and thereby defines her

marriage in a new light. Mutual love and respect define the fairy-tale hero’s marriage, in contrast to the king’s broken marriage and moral ambiguity. In nineteenth-century Bengal, the urban middle-class intellectuals were at work reimagining the perfect family, based on consensual, companionate marriages. In the fairy tales, the valorization of monogamy and the rejection of polygamy as an obsolete, barbaric practice was symptomatic of the intellectual debates and social and legal reforms of the time concerning the right age and the right forms of marriage (Sarkar 194).

The fairy-tale hero in these stories is not necessarily male. Though male heroes outnumber their female counterparts, there are a few instances in which the female child takes the lead. “The Story of Prince Sobur” from Lal Behari Day’s *Folk Tales of Bengal*, for instance, juxtaposes the meanness, selfishness, and arrogance of the father with the courage, endurance, and generosity of the youngest daughter. The merchant, the father of six daughters, banishes the youngest girl because she does not comply with his egoist self-promotion. When the father



asks, “By whose fortune do you get your living?” five of his six daughters say, “Papa, we get our living by your fortune.” The youngest daughter, however, has a different response: “I get my living by my own fortune” (119). This enrages the merchant. Not being able to tolerate his daughter’s independent thinking, he disowns her. The story offers a subtle critique of the gerontocratic ideal; the ritualistic worship of the parent figure, whose worth is never proven, is exposed to be hollow and dangerous. In the end, the daughter’s character is glorified not only on account of her ability to forgive her father but also because of the immense patience and courage she shows in protecting her ailing husband, the eponymous Prince Sobur, who has been victimized by her jealous sisters.

One of the most noticeable aspects of the journey of child-heroes in the Bengali fairy tales is that their narrative is not merely theirs; it is essentially their family's story. The young hero often has to work as the chief agent for the reintegration of the family. All their adventures start with the motive of finding some lost family member, and it is only by chance that they meet their love interest. Their marriage does draw the conventional happy closure to the story, which is basically a narrative of origins; the ultimate bliss of the *happily ever*

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after stems from the assurance that the hero's marriage is likely to produce a legitimate heir and thus will ensure the continuation of the family lineage. But, unlike Western fairy tales that have the union of the lovers as their narrative focus, the Bengali fairy tales have their climactic moments in family reunions. While the fathers and mothers in these tales do not play a big part in the main narrative, they are never entirely eliminated from the plot. They miraculously survive multiple tortures, transformations, and deaths, as they are kept at the fringes, only to be brought back to the limelight at the very end. We feel happy when—after overcoming several obstacles—Cinderella or Rapunzel or Beauty finally find their respective lovers; it hardly matters if they get to meet their mothers, fathers, or siblings by the end of the story. This is never the case with the Bengali fairy tales. The fairy-tale hero has to *reclaim his agency* in the face of all the adversary forces that have been responsible for the breakdown of his family and his kingdom. The young fairy-tale

hero is an idealized version of a citizen of the emerging nation.

Against the background of a weak and unjust father emerges the ideal son (and/or daughter), whose legendary valor and prowess make amends for the family's shameful history. The fairy-tale collections discussed here make use of the subversive possibility inherent in the figure of the child in order to undermine the colonial/adult ideal and affirm an alternative identity in response to the reductionist, stereotypical images imposed by the orientalist, colonial discourse. The unwise, morally corrupt, impotent, and cruel king is the exact opposite of the colonial righteous, rational, dependable, intelligent adult. It is the young hero who saves the day and projects the ideals of a new age and a new nation; child becomes the father of man.

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Interview with Hadil Ghoneim, an Author from Egypt

by YASMINE MOTAWY



Hadil Ghoneim, from author's personal collection.

Hadil is a bilingual (Arabic and English) Egyptian author of several books for children and young adults and an active essayist. Her bestselling *Sana fi Qena* [A Year in Qena] received a great deal of attention, was on the 2016 IBBY Honor List, and was shortlisted for the 2014 Etisalat Award for Arabic Children's Literature. She is known for her humorous and realistic middle-reader books that focus on community building. In her early career, Hadil wrote biographies of notable Egyptians for middle readers and in 2006 her biography of Nobel prize-winning author Naguib Mahfouz was selected to be added to all Egyptian public-school libraries. During her time as senior editor at the Cairo-based publishing house Dar El Shorouk, she translated and localized into Arabic many books for children, including the famous book series *Geronimo Stilton*. Hadil's essays, profiles, and interviews have appeared in numerous Egyptian media outlets. Hadil holds an MA in culture and society from the London School of Economics and a BSc in political science from Cairo University. She is currently based in Michigan with her husband and young daughter.



So, Hadil, how did you make your way from studying in the humanities to writing for children?

After I finished my MSc in cultural studies at LSE, I was meant to return to my editorial job at *Weghat Nazar*, a literary review magazine in Egypt. Instead, I found myself happily accepting a position in the children's books department at the magazine's parent company, Dar El Shorouk. It felt like the most natural thing for me, because even as a student, I was always finding ways to steer my work towards the world of children's literature. For example, as a fresh graduate I led a team of volunteers in an oral cultural

heritage project by collecting traditional “house tales” from women all over Egypt. Years later, I chose to write my master’s dissertation on the local reception of Disney’s Mickey Mouse comic magazines in their Egyptianized version.

Writing for children, however, came gradually; I started with translating, localizing, and editing translations of children’s books. My first book for children was the Naguib Mahfouz biography. I was comfortable writing a research-based book because I had been specifically trained to write research, and I loved the process of storifying and simplifying. After two years at Dar El Shorouk, I had authored three more picturebooks that were turned into the Green Home Series and covered topics like waste and water management, civic responsibility, and community engagement. It was a fantastic beginning because I was working alongside the art director, the illustrators, and the graphic designers in the “kitchen,” so to speak, and the learning and confidence curve was high.



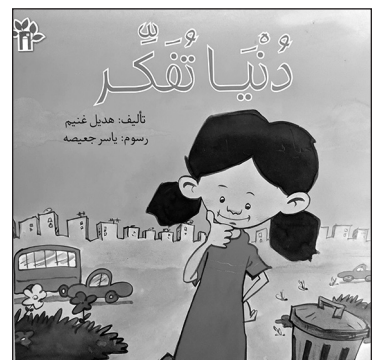
How do the other hats you wear impact the “children’s author” hat?

I get excited by research-based writing projects, and early on in my career I felt that my books had to have a strong informative value. I wanted them to carry all I had found important in studying and writing about politics, dialogue, community, and culture. Today, I feel more focused on my writing as a creative expression of myself that is performed for the child reader. Losing those hats along the way has liberated my writing and made it subtler. The parenthood hat must be informing my work as well, as I am always peeking into the world of children as I watch my daughter grow. Another hat I currently wear is that of “resident alien” in the US, a status that keeps my senses open and my mind active in constantly reflecting on what is universal and what is culture-specific.



How has your trajectory changed as a writer in terms of themes, style, or topic?

While there was a strong storytelling element in my work from the start, even in the biographies I wrote for middle readers, it was only in 2011 that I broke out of the nonfiction mold, when I wrote *A Year in Qena*. Even though it was grounded in factual research and touched on the difficult themes of the rural/urban divide, religious discrimination, and the ways in which modern children deal with tradition, I found fiction to be a better conveyer of difficult ideas and emotions. Now, I am making a second shift, from realistic fiction to fantasy, in my forthcoming title *Layali Shahrzadi*, and the freedom to imagine and develop fantastical characters and endings has been thrilling.



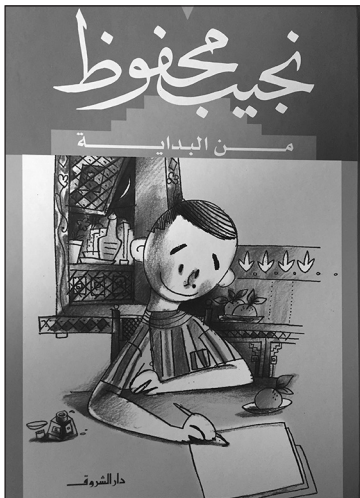


How has the political environment impacted your writing?

I seek refuge from the political environment in writing and reading. I think books that matter are the ones that can be meaningful and enjoyable at any point in time. A politically charged moment might urge me to write an article, but not a book. Nevertheless, my reactions to the political environment may very well come through in my writing, albeit indirectly. It could be in the form of a heightened sensitivity to race, gender, class, or fairness. Children rightly worry about the world and the safety of their future, and I like to think that I can address these worries in my writing. A simple story about people learning to get along is to me a political expression of hope.

What is your relationship to your reading audience like, and what do you know and think of the Egyptian child reader?

I am aware of the great class segmentation in Egyptian society, and I try to gauge the reception of my books in various contexts; I conduct workshops at international schools as a visiting author, but I also work with community schools connected to NGOs in less privileged neighborhoods. I interact with parents and teachers on my social media accounts, and their feedback on my work has been very useful. Unfortunately, it is near impossible to arrange author visits at state-run public schools. What I have found is that essentially, readers are readers, and it is to our commonality and the universality of human feeling that I write. In my mind, there is a child reader that is bored, yet curious about the world, about her/himself and about others, hungry for human connection as well as for knowledge and in need of reassurance. As for reading behavior, I think children who have more access to books end up reading more without much intervention. I worry about reading promotion in Egypt, where many children do not have access to public libraries or school libraries and where book prices are often prohibitive to the majority of Egyptian families. Although the government does release heavily subsidized editions of select books every year, there is so much more that can be done to get books in the hands of Egyptian children.



What is next for you?

My new book, *Captain Shereen*, has just come out. It is about a girl who wants to join the boys in playing soccer. When they turn her down because they don't believe girls can play soccer, she challenges them to a girls versus boys match. Her challenge then becomes how to train the girls before the big game. Another book in the pipeline that I'm very



excited about is a re-envisioning of the *1001 Nights*. I altered the frame story into one about modern contemporary children, setting the stage for the retelling of the original fantasy tales in a way that highlights issues that I care about, while using a seemingly classic rhyming prose. I am hoping this book transcends age classifications, as I tried to present this version of the *1001 Nights* in accessible Arabic that can be read aloud to a younger child or independently by an older one.

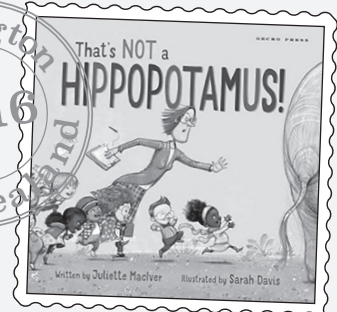
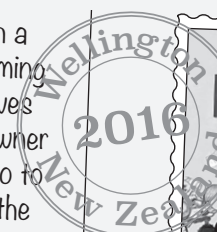
Yasmine Motawy teaches rhetoric and composition at the American University in Cairo and is a translator, scholar, editor, and writing coach in the area of children's literature. Her other scholarly interests include informal education, service learning, life narratives, and speculative fiction. Motawy was involved in the revival of the Egyptian section of IBBY from 2012-2018. She served on the 2016 and 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury, as well as the 2017 Etisalat Award for Arabic Children's Literature Jury.



A class of children on a day trip in a safari park with a missing hippopotamus provides the setting for this rhyming romp. As the class arrives at the park, one child observes there is no hippopotamus listed at the gate. The park owner assures them there is a hippopotamus, but when they go to look at the lake, it's not there. Thus starts the hunt by the children, many of whom patently don't know what a hippopotamus looks like.

The rhyming text's perfect meter comes back with balanced regularity to the class refrain, "That's not a hippopotamus!" Detailed, humorous illustrations allow young viewers to spot the hippopotamus on the illustrations' periphery, while everyone in the class except for young Liam misses it. This was a well-deserved winner of the 2017 Best Picturebook Award from the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults.

Nicola Daly



Juliette MacIver

That's Not a Hippopotamus!

Illus. Sarah Davis

Wellington: Gecko Press, 2016.

30 pp.

ISBN: 9781927271971

(Picturebook; ages 2-7)

Bond with the Best:

Exploring India's Ruskin Bond as a Writer of Children's Literature

by MONALI CHATTERJEE

Ruskin Bond (b. 1934) is a highly acclaimed author of children's literature. He is well known as an Indian author who writes in English and has also won commendation abroad. He has written novels, short stories, and essays. Bond has produced books both for children

and adults. His stories are marked with simplicity, directness of style, and authenticity of the persons and experiences they portray. His children's stories make for such a delightful reading experience that they are equally enjoyed both by children and adults.



Ruskin Bond's works project the Anglo-Indian community to "refer to the shaping of Indian identity and the construction of an Indian nation which is mostly a mixture of so many communities" (Laskar 79). For instance, Bond's first work, *Room on the Roof* (not addressed to a specific age group), which won him the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957, focuses on the crisis of one's own identity in the post-Independence era, as it explores a British child's desire to blend with the niceties of the common people of the Indian society. He wrote this in 1953 when he was only seventeen years old. Most of his stories are set in the small towns of India, crowded with common people and everyday incidents of humdrum existence. Through the lucidity of his style and directness of his language,

he has seamlessly formed a definite bonding with his young readers.

Bond has achieved great popularity through his short stories. In his short story "The Thief," he shows in his characteristically convincing way that the reformation of a habitual criminal is best achieved through love and understanding, rather than sermons or punishments. It is a first-person narration by a young boy and, hence, adds immense credibility to its plot. The young protagonist, who is the thief in the title, makes sincere reflections upon the nature of human beings:

It's easy to rob a greedy man because he deserves to be robbed. It's easy to rob a rich man because he deserves to be robbed. But it's

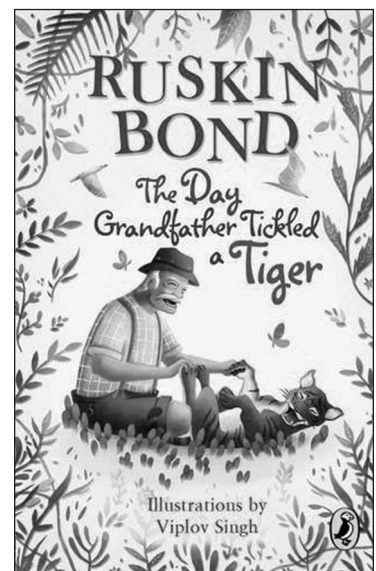
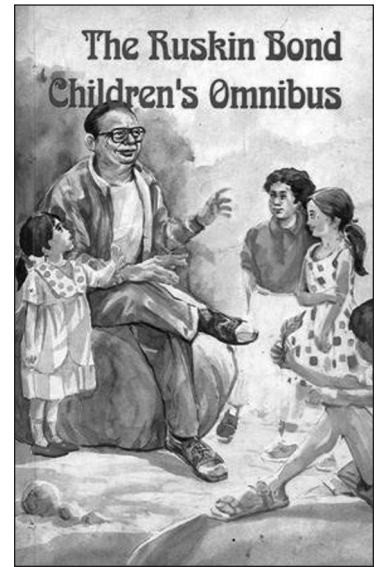
difficult to rob a poor man, even one who really doesn't care if he's robbed. (Bond, *Complete* 31)

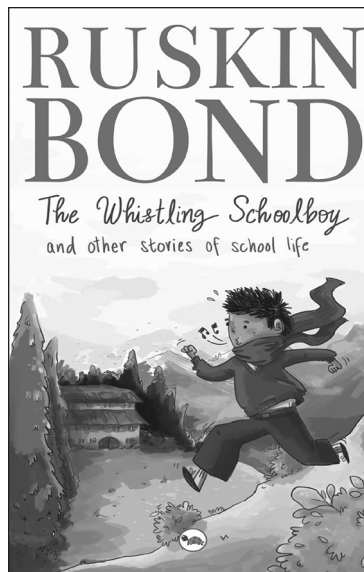
Bond's keen observation is also reflected through his protagonists. The thief in the above-mentioned story confesses, "I have made a study of men's faces when they have lost something of material value. The greedy man shows panic, the rich man shows anger, the poor man shows fear" (32). He meditates upon how the person who had trusted him would be saddened at the betrayal of his trust.

Similarly, "The Boy Who Broke the Bank" offers some deep insights about human values. Both "The Thief" and "The Boy Who Broke the Bank" are commonly anthologized in collections of children's short stories due to the important lessons they teach about life. Though Bond's stories appear to most children as delightful narratives, they successfully rouse the interest of adult readers through their social perspectives. From a darker perspective, "The Boy Who Broke the Bank" also illustrates the bleak picture of child labor in our country. The child character Nathu is a sweeper and a second child, Sitaram, is a launderer's son who delivers the wash from door to door. The trafficking of girls has also been subtly dealt with in "A Case for Inspector Lal." "He Said It with Arsenic" probes into the intuitive nature of human beings. Many of Bond's stories have been adapted to films, including *Junoon*, *The Blue Umbrella*, and *Saat Khoon Maaf*.

"In the Garden of My Dreams," "Owls in the Family," "Adventures in a Banyan Tree," "Thus Spoke Crow," and "Bird Life in the City" are some of his essays and vignettes that demonstrate not only his proximity to nature but also his sensitivity toward it. Bond's profound bonding with the flora and fauna of his immediate serene environs of Dehra is evident even in the titles of his stories: "The Cherry Tree," "My Father's Trees in Dehra," "Panther's Moon," "The Leopard," "The Prospect of Flowers," "The Monkeys," and "A Tiger in the House." The animals that feature in Bond's stories are not anthropomorphic. When depicting animals and their behavior, Bond's stories adhere closely to realism.

"A Tiger in the House" is a simple story about how even the most ferocious animals can be tamed by affection. This story depicts how a baby tiger is given refuge by the author's grandfather. As it grows into an adult tiger, it becomes violent and dangerous and is left in the custody of a zoo. Months later, when the author's grandfather visits the tiger, the ferocious beast suddenly mellows down in front of him and ardently licks away the old man's caressing hand that he sticks in through the bars of the cage. The author's grandfather is told that his tiger had died soon after he was brought to the zoo and that the beast he is now caressing is a ferocious tiger that had been captivated just days ago. Although the grandfather withdraws his trembling hand, he slowly realizes how affection is a language that can conquer the wildest of animals.





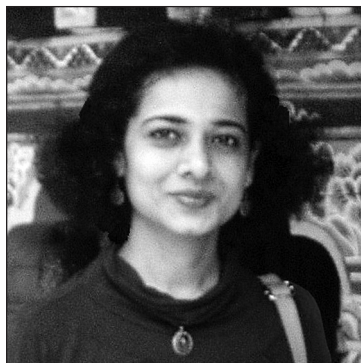
Bond's poems embody the simplicity of childhood conscience, as well as the keen sensitivity of a curious observer. His expression of thought often provides fresh perspectives. Most of his poems appeal to children as readers, due to their lucidity of style and amusing expressions like "Lone Fox Dancing," "Secondhand Shop in Hill Station," "A Frog Screams," "A Song for Lost Friends," "Kites," and "Cherry Tree."

Bond's use of language is simple and replete with Hindi words like "nimbu pani" (in "He Said It with Arsenic") or "shikari" (in "A Tiger in the House"). His description of details is simple and unswerving, yet presents vivid images. Bond writes, "People often ask me why my style is so simple. It is, in fact, deceptively simple, for no two sentences are alike. It is clarity that I am striving to attain, not simplicity" (Bond, *Best* xii).

In 1992, Ruskin Bond received the Sahitya Akademi Award for his literary contributions to India, especially for his collection of short stories, *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (1992). He received the Padma Shri, India's fourth highest civilian honor, in 1999, for his contribution to children's literature.

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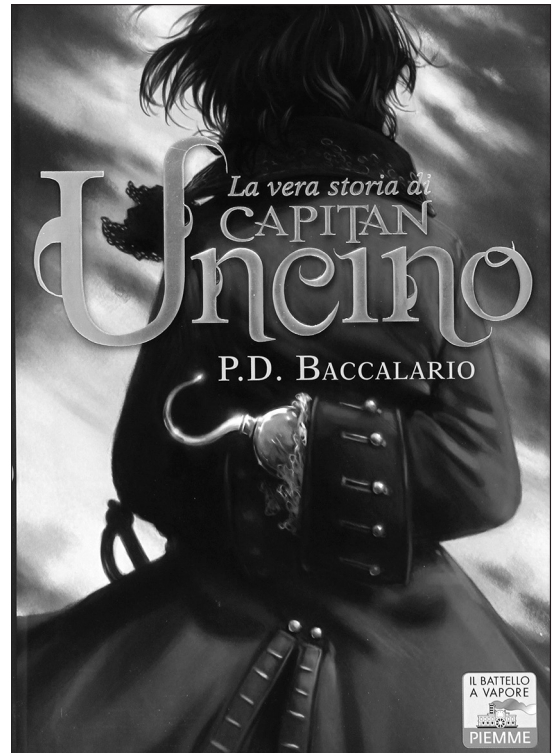
Monali Chatterjee is interested in communication studies. She has taught communication skills for various professional courses, and for fifteen years, she has taught English language and literature in various colleges across Gujarat. She has had a long-term involvement with Indian renaissance literature, with her doctoral thesis focusing on women in Indian fiction. She presents papers at national and international conferences and is the author of numerous research articles.

Globalization and Italian Children’s Publishing

by MANUELA SALVI

In 2012, only one fourth of the books produced by Mondadori, the largest Italian publishing house, were written by Italian authors. And of all the books in translation, only 3% were from non-English-speaking countries. This meant that, in a typical Italian bookshop, it was easier to find a book translated from English than to find a book by an Italian author. As Amselle highlights, through globalization, American culture has become a sort of agent of universalization, in which our specificities can be reformulated but not necessarily lost. However, I have noticed over the years that the best compliment an Italian children’s author can receive today is something like: “Oh, your book is so good, it doesn’t even sound as if it’s written by an Italian author; it could be English or American!” The writers’ reaction to this kind of comment is often hopefulness, because they are generally aware of inhabiting a world within a world, and that consequently their culture depends on a “core” that often ignores its “peripheries.”

When analyzing the historical development of Italian culture in the last century, it is not hard to find several intersections with American culture. A few examples are the CPI (the Committee of Public Information), which in 1918 flooded Italy with millions of dispatches, postcards, and flags in order to promote the political “friendship” between the two countries; the Marshall Plan; Hollywood; and twenty years of Berlusconi’s government, during which Italian television was radically transformed in accord with the American model. Generations of children grew up with American words and values, which were seen as necessary to having a life full of adventures, power, and wealth; they got used to assimilating narratives in which the hero was hardly ever Italian. Even the Italian language has changed under the influence of American globalized culture. In Italy, words from English are slowly being assimilated into everyday speech and then officially become part of the Italian vocabulary. In the last edition of Tullio De Mauro’s Italian dictionary, 5,370 out of 316,800 words are English. It doesn’t



seem like an impressive number, since it represents only 1.7% of the Italian language, but it is important to note that all these English terms—from *computer* to *stalker*, *target*, *meeting*, *T-shirt*, and so on—are among the most commonly used words in everyday life. Furthermore, the official dictionary does not include words commonly used in spoken language and slang that are a fusion between the original English word and an Italian suffix (for example: *chat* combined with the Italian verb suffix *-are* makes *chattare*, meaning to chat online).

Many published books by Italian authors now look like American or British editions, since their covers display the title in English. Some examples are *The Frozen Boy* by Guido Sgardoli, the series *Candy Circle* by Domenico Baccalario, and *Tales from the Darkroom* by Alessandro Gatti and Manuela Salvi. This trend seems to demonstrate that some Italian authors are part of that cultural reception highlighted by Rydell and Kroes, in which people not only consume what they like, but also elaborate and reuse this material to reshape narratives that are perceived to be universal. Ultimately, a peripheral group that has been culturally invaded within a globalized system can only express itself through the categories of the group that represents the core. On the other hand, American culture has always been the symbol of modernity, hope, enterprise, and possibility. Such values as going beyond people's differences and dismissing elitism in order to affirm an egalitarian society, in which each individual can find his or her place, are widely accepted as being universal.

Moreover, in the global market, being translated and published in other countries has become a sign of success, especially being translated and published in English-speaking countries. As Emily Apter notes, everyone wants a special place in the publishing market. For example, postcolonial authors, minority authors, and Scandinavian writers have gained international visibility. So, it is only natural for several Italian authors to try to write for a global audience, building translatability into their texts. However, what is considered too exotic, or not exotic enough, is not going to work in this system, and that may be the reason why Italian children's literature often remains stuck in anonymity.

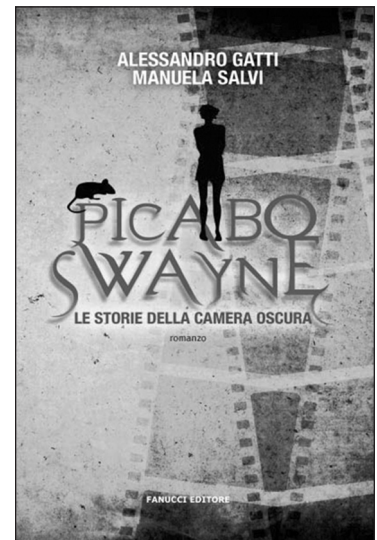
While many intellectuals at the beginning of the industrial era wished for a world literature, in which national boundaries no longer constrained authors' creativity, there is now evidence of what Moretti describes regarding the destiny of a culture. According to him, within the process of globalization, a culture of the periphery is always intertwined with and modified by the culture of the core, that is to say American and "Anglo-Saxon" culture in general. Italian children's publishing, in its transnational contemporary form, often participates in the process of "deculturation." Italian children experience the hegemony of corporate diversity in which cultural goods are commodities that are supposed to spread specific values. Consequently, Italian youth uses the products of global culture to deal with local conditions, often through escapism and imagined lives, as Wise would say. Although young people are encouraged to reshape cultural contents in order to become producers and not simply consumers, the future always seems to be something that comes from foreign places.

And, consequently, the present is delocalized by flows of ideas, images, and new customs. In the past ten years, for example, enthusiastic Italian children have been celebrating Halloween, embracing the foreign tradition as naturally belonging to them, while stunned grandparents wonder why on earth their grandchildren are wearing fancy costumes at a time that has always been dedicated to dead relatives.

When I attended a scriptwriting course at the national broadcasting company in Italy, one of our instructors told us that extraterrestrials would never, ever land in Florence. He was talking about genre and how some genres belong to the American tradition, to the point that it sounds unnatural when such stories are not set in American locations. Perhaps this is the reason why my colleague Alessandro Gatti and I chose San Francisco as the setting of our dystopian novel *Le storie della camera oscura* [*Tales from the Darkroom*]. The main character is Picabo Swayne, a teenage girl with a mysterious analogue camera that shows the past and the future. Her post-apocalyptic world does not resemble a real American city, and no McDonald's or Starbucks can be found nearby. However, the general appearance of the world Picabo lives in is clearly linked to the geography of San Francisco. An important element of the story, for example, is the abandoned underground, with its gates and tunnels, something that in Italy can only be found in three cities and on a much smaller and uninteresting scale. Readers on Goodreads.com commented: "This book is as good as its competitors overseas; the authors would be famous if they were American, and the dystopian story is better than the ones written by Anglo-Saxon writers, because you can feel the warmer approach of these two Mediterranean authors."

The Frozen Boy by Guido Sgardoli is the first children's book to be originally published in Italian but with an English title. During an expedition in Greenland, an American scientist named Robert Warren finds a frozen boy named Jim McPhee. Jim is an eleven-year-old Irish boy and comes from 1846. The ship that was bringing him and his family to America sank during the crossing, and Jim remained in hibernation for a century. The main character, Robert Warren, could represent in some way a piece of world history, that is to say the migration from poor countries to the dreamland America. Jim may be the symbol of the people who didn't make it, for whom the dream never came true. Sgardoli acknowledges that he has always been inspired by American authors and that he loves and often visits the United States. He also says: "Nobody has ever criticized the title; on the contrary, it is easy to remember. I'm now considering using an English pen name, because many readers have told me that my YA books do not seem Italian. My next book, anyway, will have another title in English, *The Dragon Boy*."

A book written by an Italian author, in which the influence of English culture is easily recognizable, is *La vera storia di Capitan Uncino* [*The True Story of Captain Hook*] by Pierdomenico Baccalario. Telling Captain Hook's background story, this book has had huge success, and has also been published in China. The main character is James Fry, the love child



of King George the Fourth. Exiled with his mother right after his birth, he spends his childhood in India, and goes to sea at the age of thirteen. After many ups and downs, he sails to London as the captain of a pirate ship, meets Queen Victoria, and becomes a knighted Sir. At the end of the book, as an adult, James Fry meets the playwright James Matthew Barrie and inspires him with the story of his life. Pierdomenico Baccalario's work is a perfect example of the mimesis analyzed by Serge Latouche, but in a more complex and literary form. Imitating English literature characters may be a playful way for young people to experiment with identity. Imitating English writers through the appropriation of the symbols of literature that are now universally acknowledged may be a way to try to find a voice within a dominant ideology. Admittedly, being the most active mimetic writer in Italy has rewarded Baccalario: one of his series made it into that 2% of translated books that break through into the English market every year. These are his *Ulysses Moore* books, which are deeply influenced by Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* stories. In Baccalario's version, there are three main characters, Jason, Julia, and Rick, who live in Cornwall, in an old cottage full of mysteries and secret passages. It is interesting to note that it is through food that their Italian origins are sometimes revealed.

In his list of questions to unveil ideology in children's texts, Peter Hollindale suggests wondering: Who are the people who do not exist in a given story? In the examples I have just discussed, the answer would be: Italian children. There are, of course, many more examples of books written by Italian authors in which the influence of globalization is easily recognizable. This article is only a starting point for further reflection and discussion. In any case, the international interdependence of contemporary Italian children's literature cannot be denied. Marx used to repeat that capitalism only advances on contradictory terrain, and the contradiction here may be that globalization does not attempt to obliterate local cultures, but it rather grows by operating through them, as Stuart Hall highlights. Hall also says that a possible response to globalization is a return to the local. In Italy, something is indeed starting to change since 2012: Mondadori's publishing of imported titles has now gone down from 75% to 58%. A national survey shows similar data: 44.3% of published books are translations. Nevertheless, when I recently counted the books in the children's area at a bookshop in my hometown, there were 232 imported novels and only 95 Italian ones on display. Apparently, the return to the local is a slow and nonlinear process.

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Manuela Salvi was born in 1975 in Italy, where she has published over twenty titles, some also translated for the French, Spanish, and German markets. In 2012, after her YA novel *Girl Detached* was banned in Italy, she moved to London and completed her MA in children's literature at Roehampton University. Her research project on censorship in Western children's publishing has earned her the Jacqueline Wilson Scholarship for a PhD in creative writing at the same university. She is the current chairperson of the Italian Children's Writers Association (ICWA), works as a translator and copyeditor, and teaches creative writing. *Girl Detached* was published in the UK in 2016 by The Bucket List, a Barrington Stoke's imprint.



Bookbird Volume 57.3 is expected to come out in July of 2019. It will be a special issue that focuses on contemporary children's and YA books originally published in a language other than English, including works that have subsequently been translated into English or other languages and works that have not been translated. In spite of some encouraging trends over the past few years, texts that are originally published in English continue to dominate the international exchange of stories. *Bookbird* is striving to give voice to those writers, illustrators and scholars of literature in languages other than English, within the global forum offered by the journal.

Focus IBBY

by LIZ PAGE

International Children's Book Day 2019

ICBD 2019 is sponsored by IBBY Lithuania. The poster and message are by well-known Lithuanian author and artist Kęstutis Kasparavičius, who was the 2018 Lithuanian nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. The poster is available from the IBBY Secretariat and IBBY Lithuania.

Books Help Us Not to Rush

I'm in a hurry!...I don't have time!...Good-bye!...We hear words like that almost every day, not only in Lithuania, which is in the very center of Europe, but in many other places of the world. No less frequently do we hear that we live in the age of information overload, haste, and rush.

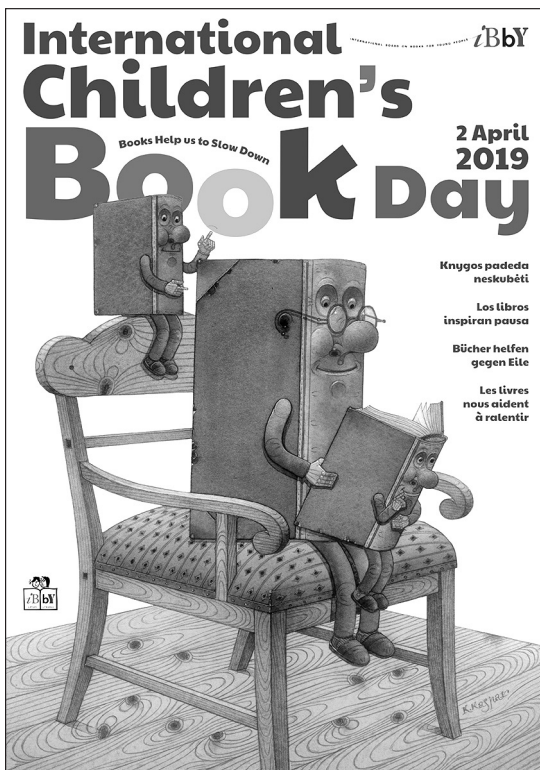
But if you take a book into your hands, you immediately feel a change. It seems that books have this wonderful quality—they help us slow down. As soon as you open a book and delve into its tranquil depths, you no longer fear that things will whizz by at a maddening speed while you see nothing. All of a sudden, you come to believe you won't have to dash off like a bat out of hell to do some urgent work of little importance. In books, things happen quietly and in a precisely arranged order. Maybe because their pages are numbered, maybe because the pages rustle gently and soothingly as you leaf through them? In books, events of the past calmly meet events that are yet to come.

The universe of a book is wide open; it happily fuses reality with imagination and fantasy. And sometimes you wonder if it was in a book or in life that you noticed how beautifully the drops of thawing snow drip from the roof, or how pleasing to the eye is the neighbor's wall overgrown with moss. Do you know it from a book or from reality that rowan berries are not only beautiful, but also bitter? Was it in a book or in reality that you were lying in the summer grass, or sitting with your legs

crossed, watching clouds sail by in the sky?

Books help us not to rush, books teach us to notice things, and books invite us, or even make us sit down for a while. We usually read sitting, with a book on our desk or on our lap, don't we?

And haven't you experienced another miracle—that when you read a book, the book reads you? Yes, of course, books can read. They read your



forehead, eyebrows, the corners of your lips as they rise and fall, but, first and foremost, books read your eyes. And looking into your eyes, they see... Well, you know what!

I am sure that books are never bored when they are on your lap. Someone who enjoys reading—be it a child or adult—is much more interesting than someone who doesn't care for books, who is always racing against the clock, who never has time to sit down, who fails to notice much of what surrounds us.

On the International Children's Book Day, my wish to all of us is:

Let there be interesting books for readers and interesting readers for books!

Kęstutis Kasparavičius

East Meets West around Children's Books and Fairy Tales: 36th IBBY International Congress, Athens, Greece, August 30 to September 1, 2018

For three days crossing from August to September, IBBY members and other experts in the field of children's literature from the East, West, North, and South met in Athens, Greece, as they attended the 36th IBBY International Congress.

The Congress was organized by IBBY Greece under the leadership of IBBY Greek President and Conference President Vassiliki Nika. She was assisted by a committee of twelve people, and a scientific committee of nine, led by Chair Petros Panaou. These twenty-three dedicated people ran a successful IBBY Congress after a record of just seventeen months of preparation.

The Congress opened on Thursday, August 30, at the Megaron Athens International Conference Centre with a warm welcome by Chryssoula Katsavria, Member of the Hellenic Parliament representing the President of the Hellenic Parliament, and Maria Andreadaki-Vlazaki, the General Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Sports. Vassiliki Nika gave the opening speech as Congress and IBBY Greece President and introduced the next speaker, Vagelis Iliopoulos. Vagelis is the 2018 Ambassador of Children's Literature and spoke on the theme *Oceans of Books Flowing among Us*. IBBY President Wally De Doncker gave a welcome speech on behalf of IBBY International. He began by talking to the Congress theme:

I am very pleased that during the Congress more than 180 speakers will take a closer look at how children's literature can play an active part in the tensions between sameness and diversity, the local and the global, and the national and transnational. In many countries there is an urgent need for reading promotion projects that welcome refugee children in the most helpful way.

As this was to be his last Congress as president, he gave a brief look back at his four years serving as IBBY President:

IBBY is an organization with a heart. There were many memorable moments, moments in which we sang, and laughed, and were also moved. It was a true gift and a privilege to be allowed to support and help to lead an organization like IBBY.

Wally De Doncker also presented tributes to two exceptional IBBY members: Katherine Paterson and María Jesús Gil.

Katherine Paterson received the Jella Lepman Medal in grateful recognition of her outstanding contributions to IBBY. The President said,



Katherine Paterson with her Jella Lepman diploma © IBBY Greece

Katherine Paterson’s international fame rests not only on her widely acclaimed novels but also on her efforts to promote literacy, in particular through her continuing support of the IBBY libraries in Gaza. In 1998 Katherine was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Award and in 2006 she was the laureate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. In 2008 we were honored to present Katherine with IBBY honorary membership at the IBBY Congress in Copenhagen. Katherine, IBBY is very grateful for your support and inspiration. You are part of IBBY history. Congratulations on behalf of the whole IBBY community!

María Jesús Gil was bestowed with Honorary Membership. Wally De Doncker said,



María Jesús Gil receiving IBBY honorary membership © IBBY Greece

María Jesús was an elected member of the IBBY Executive Committee from 1996 until 2000. Between 2009 and 2011 she served as president of the Spanish section of IBBY and was the Chair of the 32nd IBBY Congress in Santiago de Compostela in 2010. She was a member of the Jury for the Hans Christian Andersen Award for the 2008 and 2010 awards. María Jesús was elected President of the 2012 and 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury. María Jesús, IBBY is very appreciative of your many years of such outstanding contributions—thank you. Congratulations on behalf of the whole IBBY community!

After the speeches of welcome, Petros Panaou introduced the first keynote lecturer, Dr. Perry Nodelman, professor emeritus at Winnipeg University in Canada. Under the heading *Fish is People: What Post Humanism can teach us about children’s picture books and what children’s picture books can teach us about Post Humanism*, he showed us images of just about every picturebook featuring fish published in Canada and the United States.

A musical event closed the opening ceremony. Singer Zafiro Hatzifioti (soprano) and musician Panayiotis Stefos—the founder of *LyrAvlos* Centre of Greek Musical Heritage—recited a selection of epic verses from

Homer, using vocal and instrumental improvisations of Greek instruments, such as an ancient lyre, a zither, a phorminx, a Pan aulus, a diaulos, conch shells, and a musical saw. This impressive performance highlighted the Greek oral tradition.

The rest of the day was given over to eighteen oral sessions, during which fifty-nine speakers presented, and two poster sessions highlighted twenty-four posters. An interactive roundtable focusing on Chinese speakers also drew interest from the participants.

In the late afternoon, the 2018 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award was presented to *Les Doigts Qui Rêvent*. The award was received by the founder, Philippe Claudet, from Jury President Sunjidmaa Jamba and Shin-ichi Kawarada, the Asahi Shimbun representative who is the Rome bureau chief. In his speech on behalf of the Asahi Shimbun, Shin-ichi Kawarada said,

Today, all the groups nominated to IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award are continuing the efforts to show a new world to children. I would like to express my great respect for your activity. I hope that through your group's activities, more children will learn to be considerate to other people, be flexible enough to accept other cultures, and love peace.

The award comprises a certificate and US\$10,000. The day ended with a reception in the open-air atrium of the conference center.

Friday, August 31, began with a keynote lecture given by Kathy Short, who is a professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Socio-cultural Studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, USA. She is also the director of Worlds of Words (www.wowlit.org), an initiative to build bridges across global cultures through children's literature. Kathy spoke on the theme "The Dangers and Possibilities of Reading Globally." Another thirteen oral sessions took place and two more poster sessions. Deborah Ellis, an author from Canada, gave a keynote lecture entitled "Before They Give the Order."

After lunch, the 2018 IBBY Honour List was presented. Every book in this record-breaking list—191 titles this year—was presented to the accompaniment of well-known Greek melodies. Another record was broken when forty-five nominees were present at the Congress to receive their diplomas in person.

The afternoon continued with oral sessions and the IBBY Open Forum. During every IBBY Congress, the national sections are invited to participate in the Open Forum. The 2018 Open Forum was given over to the five



Zafiro Hatzifotiou and Panayiotis Stefos
© IBBY Greece



Philippe Claudet receiving the 2018 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award
© IBBY Greece



The 2018 IBBY Honour List nominees © IBBY Greece

IBBY regional groups for discussions and for renewing contacts. It is a unique chance for members to meet others from their region and encourages members to attend the biennial regional conferences.

The big event of the day was the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award gala dinner and presentation, held at the magnificent Renzo Piano building at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC) overlooking the Saronic Gulf. The 2018 winners, Eiko Kadono from Japan and Russian illustrator Igor Oleynikov, were present to receive

their diplomas and medals from IBBY president Wally De Doncker and Andersen jury president Patricia Aldana. Representing the sponsor,

Nami Island Inc., vice chairperson Lee Kye Young gave a moving speech in honor of the occasion.

Other Hans Christian Andersen award nominees were present and received their diplomas from IBBY President and Jury President: author Farhad Hassanzadeh from Iran (finalist), author nominee Vagelis Iliopoulos from Greece, illustrator nominee Jeannie Baker from Australia, and author nominee Andreas Konstantinides from Cyprus. Sunjidmaa Jamba received the diploma for her brother, Dashdondog Jamba, who sadly passed away after he had been nominated as the author nominee from Mongolia. The evening was honored by the presence of the Japanese Ambassador to Greece, H.E.

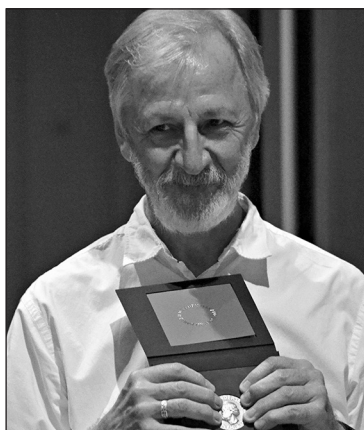
Yasuhiro Shimizu, and his wife, and Vladimir Grigoriev, the Deputy Head of the Russian Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications.

The final day of the Congress began with the 2018 IBBY General Assembly. Sixty-three national sections were represented either by a delegate (60) or by proxy (3). The biennial business meeting of IBBY is the main event for the management of IBBY international. During the General Assembly, the activities of IBBY are approved and the treasurer's report for the previous two years is presented and, with the auditor's report, is approved by the membership. The President of IBBY, the President of the Hans Christian Andersen Award, and the members of the Executive Committee are elected at the assembly from nominations submitted by the IBBY national sections, to serve for the following two years—until the next General Assembly.

Meanwhile, keynote speaker Leila (Roya) Maktabi Fard from Iran talked to the theme "Two Women, Two Continents, One Aspiration." A special roundtable discussion took place with Greek and international authors and addressed the theme "The Crisis of Culture or the Culture of Crisis." The roundtable was moderated by Eva Kaliskami and the participants were Vagelis Iliopoulos



Jury President Patricia Aldana and Lee Kye Young © IBBY Greece



Illustrator Hans Christian Andersen Award winner Igor Oleynikov from Russia © IBBY Greece

(Greece), Eiko Kadono (Japan), Igor Oleynikov (Russia), Katherine Paterson (USA), and Loty Petrovits (Greece). Two more keynote lectures led to the close of the scientific program of the 36th IBBY Congress: “The Light within the Story: Fairy Tales in a Dark Time,” presented by Gregory Maguire from the USA, and “Creating Awareness of IBBY and Its Mission through the Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration Exhibitions,” presented by Michael Neugebauer from Austria.

The Congress closing ceremony took place after lunch. Outgoing IBBY President Wally De Doncker thanked the 2016–2018 Executive Committee and the outgoing President of the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury, Patricia Aldana, for their dedication and support. He also gave warm thanks to the Congress organizers, presenting Vassiliki Nika with a signed and numbered graphic print of Květa Pacovská’s image of *The Steady Tin Soldier*.

Incoming IBBY President Mingzhou Zhang introduced the IBBY Executive Committee for the term 2018-2020. He also thanked the Congress organizers and all members of IBBY for placing their trust in him and the new Executive Committee to lead IBBY.

The establishment of an important new IBBY award was announced during the closing ceremony. The new IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award is sponsored by the Shenzhen iRead Foundation in China. The agreement was signed ceremonially at the closing ceremony by Li Wen, the Director General of the Shenzhen iRead Foundation; Li Zhe, the Executive Director of the Shenzhen iRead Foundation; and Liz Page and Mingzhou Zhang on behalf of IBBY. The award has been established by the Shenzhen iRead Foundation and IBBY to encourage a real commitment to the cause of reading promotion in the hope of spreading this dedication to others around the globe.

Every two years IBBY will invite nominations from IBBY national sections that recognize outstanding individuals who are working to promote the expansion and development of children’s reading.

From the nominations, the jury will select two winners. The first awards will be presented in 2020 at the 37th IBBY Congress in Moscow, Russia.

The celebrations continued with a look at fifty years of IBBY Greece, presenting the section’s contribution to children’s and young adult



Author Hans Christian Andersen Award winner Eiko Kadono from Japan with IBBY President Wally De Doncker © IBBY Greece



IBBY Executive Committee 2018-2020, from l to r: Ellis Vance (IBBY Treasurer, USA), Junko Yokota (President of the 2020 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury, USA), Anastasia Arkhipova (Russia), Carole Bloch (South Africa), Hasmig Chahinian (France), Zohreh Ghaeni (Iran), Sophie Hallam (UK), Mingzhou Zhang (IBBY President, China), Basarat Midhat Kazim (Pakistan), Shereen Kreidieh (Lebanon), Ahmad Redza Ahmad Khairuddin (Malaysia), Nora Lia Sormani (Argentina), and Sylvia Vardell (USA). (Not included in photo: Liz Page, Executive Director; Janelle Mathis and Petros Panaou, *Bookbird* Editors) © IBBY Greece



Signing the IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award, from l to r: Li Zhe, Wang Xinting, Li Wen, Liz Page, and Mingzhou Zhang © IBBY Greece

literature in Greece. It was wonderful to see all the past and present members of IBBY Greece on the stage, together with a visual presentation of milestones over the section’s past fifty years. It was a fitting addition to the 36th IBBY Congress.

The final presentation was given by IBBY Russia, inviting participants to attend the 37th IBBY International Congress. The theme is “Great Big World through Children’s Books” and will be held in Moscow from September 5–7, 2020—book the date!

The very final activity of the 36th IBBY International Congress was a musical event showing the East and West meeting through dance and music. As usual, IBBY members cannot resist dancing, so the last images of the

Congress have to be IBBY members dancing to the Greek rhythms. Congratulations and thank you, IBBY Greece!

Liz Page



The IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award

IBBY Sections around the World

Over the next issues we will be highlighting different national sections and their activities. The first in the series is the newly established IBBY section in El Salvador. Patricia Aldana visited the section in the summer and brought us back this report.

Dreams and Libraries in El Salvador

Every Saturday Jorge Argueta and Carolina Osorio drive to the San Jacinto market in the city of San Salvador. They pull boxes and boxes of books, mats, posters, child-size wooden chairs, and a sign saying “*Biblioteca de los Sueños*” out of their car. Then they set all this up in a space next to the entrance to the market, where trucks deliver goods to the stallholders who are selling inside.

Some boys are playing football in there, but they soon rush to help with the setup of the *Biblioteca*.

Some teenage girls appear and help to unpack the books, then children start to arrive. Jorge goes off and does a circuit of the market stalls and brings back a lot more children—some are very young, and their parents do not let them set off for the *Biblioteca* alone.

A ten-year-old girl runs in and grabs an armful of books that she clutches to her chest. She sits on a little chair and starts reading, but she makes sure no one else can take any books out of her pile. She is the supreme reader and she lets you know it. This does not make her very popular with the other girls, but in the end they make some kind of peace. Soon enough, everyone is reading, to themselves, to their smaller friends, to each other.

San Jacinto is, as they say in San Salvador, a “difficult” area. This means that there is a good deal of gang activity. And the market is not exempt. But the *Biblioteca de los Sueños* is trusted by all and no one bothers them.

The library in the market grew from the work of the *Biblioteca de los Sueños*, which Jorge and his cousin built in Jorge’s backyard. Jorge Argueta

is a Pipil (Nahua) Indian—an indigenous group in El Salvador. He left El Salvador during the 1980s, when his life was endangered by the terrible killings during the “Cold War” that was raging in Central America. He made his way to San Francisco. After some hard times, he began to write. He is now a very highly regarded poet and author of books for children and has won many prizes.*

Three years ago, Jorge decided that he needed to go home to take care of the children whose lives are once again in peril due to gangs, poverty, and deep, unresolved social injustice. And the result is this marvelous library. The main library in Jorge’s backyard serves local children and acts as the school library for a number of neighborhood schools. These schools have minimal budgets of around just US\$1,200 a year and cannot afford to have libraries—or much of anything else. The children who attend the schools may be in physical danger and some have even been killed on their way to school. The principals of the schools are truly grateful to have access to the reading promotion activities and books provided by the *Biblioteca de los Sueños*.

Jorge’s library, at his house and in the market, is an oasis for these children. Jorge has instilled a love of books and reading in them. He has been joined by Carolina, who works with a German aid agency in El Salvador. Both of them have other jobs that support them and their obligations to families, but they devote a very large number of hours to these children and the libraries.

What do they need? Jorge dreams of having a permanent stall at the market. He could then help train young people as reading promoters to extend the hours and possibilities of reaching more children. An even bigger dream is to have a biblio-truck that could take books to communities around the city and outside into the villages around the countryside, many of which are indigenous. Money is needed, not only to expand and fulfill these dreams, but also to buy high-quality books and to allow the shipping of book donations to El Salvador, where there is almost no local children’s book production or availability.

There is a lot of support for Jorge’s work in El Salvador, including from the minister of culture, the head of the National Library, and the founder of MUPI (Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen). The *Biblioteca de los Sueños*, with the book community, which includes storytellers, writers, university presses, librarians, and teachers, has now established the IBBY National Section of El Salvador. An important achievement this year was the approval of *Biblioteca de los Sueños* as a legal charitable entity, which allows them to receive donations from within and outside El Salvador.

El Salvador, with its neighbors Guatemala and Honduras, are three of the five most dangerous peacetime countries in the world. Hundreds of thousands of people, from babies to adolescents to families, have left these countries seeking safety and a way to make a living. But the welcome they receive after the long and terrible journey is extremely cold, especially now. If only life in El Salvador could be much better and safer for its children. If only every child could have a chance to become a lifelong reader by coming into contact with Jorge and Carolina’s *Biblioteca de los*

Sueños. Maybe then, the children of El Salvador could gain some power and agency over their lives, feel loved and cared for as well as safe, and be able to dream of a future in their own country.

Patricia Aldana

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- 2001 Américas Award for Latin American Literature, *A Movie in My Pillow*
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 2002 Skipping Stones Honor Award for Multicultural Literature, *A Movie in My Pillow*
 2003 Américas Award for Children & Young Adult Literature—Commendation, *Xochitl and the Flowers / Xochitl, la niña de las flores*
 2004 Independent Publisher Book Award Multicultural Fiction Juvenile/Young Adult—Finalist, *Xochitl and the Flowers / Xochitl, la niña de las flores*
 2005 NAPPA Gold Award—Preschool/Kindergarten, *Moony Luna / Luna, Lunita, Lunera*
 2006 Américas Award for Children & Young Adult Literature, *Talking with Mother Earth*
 2008 Américas Award for Children & Young Adult Literature—Commendation, *Alfredo Flies Home*
 2011 Northern California Book Award—Finalist, *Arroz con leche: Un poema para cocinar / Rice Pudding: A Cooking Poem*
 2017 Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award, *Somos como las nubes / We Are Like the Clouds*



Liz Page was born in Britain and moved with her family to Heidelberg, Germany, in 1983. After nearly two years they left Germany and settled in Basel, Switzerland. Through her interest in children and books Liz helped to establish the Intercultural Children's Library in Basel—JUKIBU, which opened in 1990. She was a member of the managing board with responsibility for the day-to-day running of the library for the first years and was elected President of the Intercultural Children's Libraries Association of Switzerland, now called INTERBIBLIO. She joined IBBY as Assistant to the Executive Director in 1997 and in 2009 was appointed Executive Director.

Books on Books

BY JUTTA REUSCH

POSTCOLONIAL APPROACHES TO LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

By Ann B. González. Series: Children's Literature and Culture. Routledge, 2018. 192 pages. ISBN: 978-1-138-12473-8

In her monograph, Ann B. González explores a little-studied aspect of Latin American literature for children and young adults. A professor in Spanish and Latin American studies at the University of North Carolina, she asks whether and how literary works for young readers reflect the conquest and colonialization of Central and South America and their enduring political, economic, social, and above all cultural consequences.

Using the theoretical framework of post-colonial studies, she traces colonial structures, which are visible in the antagonism and unequal distribution of political, economic, and cultural influence and participation among descendants of former colonizers and native groups. Even the largest group, the mestizo, is unable to bridge the gap, and is instead caught in a double bind: on the one hand, they feel inferior to the "white," "Western," European, and North American culture; on the other hand, they look down upon indigenous culture, even though it is also part of their roots, and try to distance themselves from that heritage.

In each chapter, González presents a case study of one work of fiction to illustrate her argument. Despite the study's title, the corpus is restricted to Spanish-language literature; books in Portuguese from Brazil, or in French from Guinea, are not taken into consideration, nor are the few titles for children published in indigenous languages. In fact, the choice of texts is unconventional. Recent books for children remain the exception, such as the novel *Mo* by Costa Rican author Lara Ríos. Most works are by canonical authors of Latin American literature, such as Horacio Quiroga, Augusto

Roa Bastos, and César Vallejo, who are less known for their books for children; other works were not originally addressed to young readers but only subsequently adapted, such as the creation myth of the Quiché-Maya "Popol Vuh" or the Nicaraguan drama "El Güegüense" (aka "Macho Ratón"), dating back to colonial times and remarkably adapted to picturebook format by María López Vigil and Nivio López Vigil.

Despite the surprising and somewhat random corpus, the individual chapters are convincing. González never loses sight of the overarching question while analyzing the various examples of historical, social, and literary context, shedding light on a wide array of aspects. In the chapter on César Vallejos, for example, she uses the story "Paco Yunque," created in 1931 and first published in 1951, to show how the protagonists, Paco Yunque, the indigenous boy, and his classmate Humberto Grieve, a member of the white upper class, embody the unresolved antagonism between the contrasting heritages. While other critics have focused on the contrast between rich and poor, González frames the conflict from a cultural perspective, by looking at different ways of communicating, for example, or opposing views on personal property.

In the chapter on "Popol Vuh," González traces how different adaptations and rewritings have culturally appropriated the original myth, a linguistically complex work with a confusing chronology. Stripped of its indigenous cultural roots by at times drastic changes, it suffered linguistic Hispanicization as well as narrative streamlining to comply with Western linear storytelling traditions. Only more recent adaptations for young readers have begun acknowledging the indigenous origins of the myth, in text and image, instead of veiling it.

Overall, Ann B. González has written a stimulating study, well worth reading, which opens up new perspectives on Latin American

children's literature. It demonstrates how historical events continue to impact social conditions and questions of cultural identity, and how literary works, to this day, still reflect them, consciously or unconsciously.

For future research, it would be interesting to extend the scope of this study to include more contemporary works, explicitly aimed at children, to see whether and how they perpetuate the double bind diagnosed by González.

Jochen Weber

International Youth Library

AFFECT, EMOTION, AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: Representation and Socialization in Texts for Children and Young Adults

Edited by Kristine Moruzi, Michelle J. Smith, and Elizabeth Bullen. Series: Children's Literature and Culture. Routledge, 2018. 215 pages.

ISBN: 978-1-138-24467-2

Since the 1990s, scholars across diverse fields have turned their attention to the central role that affect, emotion, and the pre-personal body play in shaping subjective and embodied identities, steering socialization processes, and supporting ideologies. It is only recently that the "affective turn" has been taken up in the critical analysis of children's literature, though. This volume of collected essays contributes solidly to this emerging field of discourse, leaving no doubt as to the benefit of attending to the affective and emotional dimensions of narrative representation and impact in works written for young audiences. As the coeditors propose, such attending can reveal "how texts for children and young adults are used as tools for emotional socialisation, enculturation, political persuasion, and moral or ethical education" (Bullen et al. 2).

The included essays consider texts produced across diverse European epochs and genres—from medieval advice literature and nineteenth-century waif novels, to children's literature classics such as *Black Beauty* and *A Secret Garden*, and on to recent mainstream

YA fiction and films, including *Chaos Walking*, *Delirium*, and *Frozen*. What the contributions collectively uncover is that no text is innocent when it comes to enlisting young readers' affective or emotional responses for the transmission of meanings, messages, and lessons. Some such cases, as when a reader's empathic imagination is developed through contact with a likeable protagonist who nonetheless is importantly unlike the reader, will not strike us as troubling. Other cases are not so easy: for instance, as several authors in the collection note, recent YA dystopian writing tends toward a trope wherein a lead character commits a morally ambiguous, or even obviously wrong, act for ostensibly selfish or preferentialist reasons, as when many innocents are sacrificed to save the life of a single or a few loved ones. What meanings are young hearts and minds making from such narratives?

The volume is divided into four sections. The essays featured in the first section, "Affect and the Historical Child Reader," take up cases of historical children's literature intentionally crafted to co-opt readers' affective responses for socialization purposes or for the sake of moral education. Emotions such as shame, pity, empathy, and self-confidence are particularly in the spotlight.

The second section, "Theory of Mind," contains three essays that delve into works aiming to build young readers' "mind-reading" abilities, that is, the act of modeling another's state of mind for the sake of understanding their intentions and action motivations. Concerns are justly raised regarding the moral risks involved in creating characters whom teens identify affectively with, since these characters become quasi-role models. As fictional characters, though, they often remain psychologically oversimplified and behaviorally constrained by storytelling artifices.

The third section, "Place and Space," features essays that show how affect and emotion must be localized to be most effective on young readers—that is, embedded into specific spatio-temporal, existentially weighted, and socially meaningful scenes.

The fourth section of the volume, “Emotions of Belonging,” contains chapters that examine cases where particular emotions crystallize into markers of identity and relationship, as in the case where love becomes a symbol of rebellion in a society that seeks to repress expressions of individual choice. As noted by the authors in this section, texts featuring protagonists whose identities remain marginalized in the real world deserve particular critical scrutiny, since both the perceived maladaptation and eventual adaptation of these individuals to dominant norms may be narratively constrained or prescribed by other characters’ affective appraisals of them.

The range of contributions to this volume is impressive. Some incoherence across authors’ accounts of cognitive development, as well as the distinction of emotion from affect, prove somewhat distracting at times. For instance, at least one author works from the assumption that children have very few developed capacities for mind modeling and emotional representation, while others cite research to the contrary and build provocative theses on this evidence. Some conciliation is called for, and this is left up to the reader. And while the coeditors’ opening chapter offers a truly helpful clarification of the distinction between “affect” and “emotion,” this distinction is not consistently articulated and built upon across contributions. Nevertheless, the thirteen essays collected in this volume are thought-provoking and bear much fruit for future analyses.

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HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: Imagination and the Narrative of Law

By Jonathan Todres and Sarah Higinbotham.
Oxford University Press, 2016. 291 pages.
ISBN: 978-0-19-049318-9

“A person’s a person, no matter how small.” This quotation from the famous Dr. Seuss book *Horton Hears a Who!* marks the

beginning of the volume *Human Rights in Children’s Literature*—a multidisciplinary investigation by Jonathan Todres, a professor of law at Georgia State University, and Sarah Higinbotham, a visiting assistant professor of English at Emory University. The novel study “aims to reveal children’s literature as a rich source of rights discourse” (16) from the perspectives of law, human rights education, and literary theory. In eight chapters, the volume focuses primarily on in-depth explorations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child from 1989. These are enriched by critical readings of children’s literature predominantly from the English-speaking world. The books considered range from classics, such as *The Wind in the Willows* or *Peter Pan*, to modern picturebooks, such as Doreen Cronin’s *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*. The choice of over 150 books covered in this project was based largely on their popularity among young readers, for these arguably achieve “greater...impact on children’s imaginations and perspectives” (20), according to Todres and Higinbotham. Helpfully, the volume also includes a separate bibliography, listing the children’s books discussed.

The text shifts between detailed analyses of basic human rights concepts in relation to children as articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, examples of these in chosen children’s books, and tips on implementing the findings in human rights education. In contrast to the thorough examination of the various human rights, including participation, identity, and civil and economic rights of the child, the readings of children’s literature are rather inconsistent in their depth. On the one hand, we are offered a thoughtful drawing out of the tensions in “the narrator bringing himself ‘down to [the] level’ of the grown-up” (187) in *The Little Prince*. On the other hand, as in the case of the child-adult binary in the discussion of *The Day the Crayons Quit*, Todres and Higinbotham maintain that “the child-figures in this book are sentient, individualized crayons” (204). In this instance, the reading seems forced, aiming to illustrate rather than thoroughly engage with the implications of the text.

However, Todres and Higinbotham do not remain in the realm of theorizing the child readers of books and their reactions, as they also include comments from discussions with children ages four to seventeen. These prove to be some of the most thought-provoking elements in the study. The authors read various picturebooks and novels in kindergartens and classrooms and prodded the children to talk about the stories freely, without purposeful questioning pertaining to human rights. When considering the illustrations in *Ferdinand*, one of the children notices that Ferdinand is described as “small and quiet,” but “his shadow looks stronger, like a wolf” (110). The girl then takes this observation further in saying that children, just like Ferdinand, “are in fact very strong” (p. 110). The discussions with children offer strong support for Todres and Higinbotham’s initial premise that “[s]tories give expression to human rights in a way that is more accessible to children” (3).

Due to the immensity of the subject at hand, the authors encourage further study of the connections of human rights and children’s literature, including their use in human rights education. Especially welcome would be volumes examining children’s books outside of the Anglo-American tradition, reflecting on the varying views on children and the finer points of the human rights law from around the world. The study concludes “that children need to be partners in this exploration” (211), an assertion supported throughout the study in ways of children’s participation.

Human Rights in Children’s Literature succeeds in establishing children’s books as valid and versatile accounts of human rights concepts, which can be utilized not only in human rights education but also in informing scholarly discourse on human rights law. The book offers a useful introduction to the topic for researchers, educators, and lawyers from different fields and is sure to inspire further scholarship in these areas.

Tereza Kalová
International Youth Library

MAPS AND MAPPING IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

Special issue of *Children’s Literature in Education* 48.1 (March 2017).

Edited by Anthony Pavlik and Hazel Sheeky Bird.
ISSN: 0045-6713 (Print) 1573-1693 (Online)

The present volume is proof that the so-called spatial turn has definitely reached the shores of children’s literature scholarship—and that children’s literature has an especially rich corpus to offer.¹ The editors of this special issue of *Children’s Literature in Education* have published on the forefront of this promising and productive field of cartographic explorations and shown that maps in children’s books are far more than ornamental appendages. Together with the contributors, they bring historical knowledge and interdisciplinary experience to this volume, which makes it particularly valuable: different disciplines and methods, national literatures and genres, open up new perspectives—both on the theoretical framework of spatial studies and on the narrative complexity and cultural underpinnings of children’s literature.

Following a succinct introduction by the editors, which delineates the field of research and stresses the importance of interdisciplinary and international research that transgresses generic, linguistic, and institutional boundaries, the six individual contributions explore works ranging from biographical picturebooks to classics of adventure fiction or fantasy.

Raphael Zähringer looks at the specific case of pirate treasure maps and how they operate not only as a paratextual element to help orient the reader, but also as a material object in the fictional world itself to guide fictional characters: Comparing a classic—Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883)—with a recent German picturebook series, he shows how these pirate maps, marked by an ultimately indeterminate X, function within very different literary contexts as a perfect symbol for the open-ended game of

¹ See also Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Nina Goga, eds. *Maps and Mapping in Children’s Literature: Landscapes, Seascapes and Cityscapes*. Children’s Literature, Culture, and Cognition Vol. 7. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2017.

fiction, which avoids complete closure.

Picturebooks are also the focus of Christophe Meunier's and Anna Juan Cantavella's essays. Meunier uses a semiotic approach, analyzing maps as iconotexts in five French picturebooks to determine how they organize space, both on the page and within the world depicted, depending on their shape and placement in the book. Cantavella considers Peter Sis's picturebook biographies of Columbus, Galilei, Darwin, and Saint-Exupéry, which prominently feature maps and reflect on the connection between space and identity. While serving the basic functions of situating readers in a specific time and space and of initiating adventure within that setting, Sis's maps interact with the text and other pictorial elements to question the limits of the representation of reality.

Spatial studies have long focused on the ideological dimension of maps, investigated in two contributions. Nonfiction retellings of Antarctic expeditions are the object of study of Sinead Moriarty's contribution. Following the postcolonial tradition of cartographic analysis, she casts a critical eye on British retellings of heroic-era exploration narratives to reveal how their mapping transforms the wild, mysterious landscapes into fixed entities, controlled by visual representation and serving nationalistic narratives.

Peter Doherty offers an ecocritical perspective on maps in adventure novels and fantasy by revealing how they draw on medieval cartographic traditions, and thus support a Romantic aesthetic of nature. Instead of fostering critical, analytical distance, the maps embed readers in the fictional worlds and their representation of nature as fundamentally romantic.

Alya Hameed's essay on mapping in Reif Larsen's *The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet* (2013) demonstrates how sophisticated the cartographic imagination in young adult fiction can be and how rewarding its astute analysis is. Hameed convincingly shows "how the act of mapping in literature often leads a character away from home to a place where the child can reconstruct 'home' within his or her memory—a memory that instills resistance against the

status quo of the child's position in life."

Taken together, the essays in this special issue chart the potential of a productive theoretical framework. They show how the rich and varied corpus of maps in children's literature takes on very different forms and performs a range of functions depending on the genre and historical period, and unfolds a complex cartographic imaginary well worth investigating from a multitude of critical perspectives.

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VOM PREMAKE ZUM REMAKE: Gender-Diskurse und intermediale Bezüge in den deutschen Verfilmungen der Kinderromane Erich Kästners

[From *Premake to Remake: Gender-Discourses and Intermedial References in German Film Adaptations of Erich Kästner's Children's Books*]

By Tao Zhang. Series: Studies in European Children's and Young Adult Literature; 3. Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018. 213 pages.

ISBN: 978-3-8253-6661-2

From the very outset, Erich Kästner's stories have been explored in many different media, with Kästner himself participating in this intermedial rewriting. Film was one of the most important media for Kästner. The first film adaptation of *Emil and the Detectives* from 1931, based on a screenplay by Billy Wilder, even wrote film history because it was the first-ever full-length feature sound film for children. Since then, countless film adaptations have followed, many of them media-historical milestones.

In her doctoral dissertation, Tao Zhang looks at a representative selection of German-language adaptations of four of Erich Kästner's novels for children (*Emil and the Detectives*, *Anna Louise and Anton*, *The Flying Classroom*, and *Lottie and Lisa / The Parent Trap*) from the perspective of cultural studies and analyzes them using the category of gender, "from premake to remake." Given that Erich Kästner continues to be one of the best-known German authors in general and

for children especially, Zhang's study is relevant far beyond German studies.

In recent years, the German-language film adaptations of Kästner's books attracted a fair amount of critical attention in German studies and education. The focus, however, has been on their didactic application in classroom settings, while the filmic quality of these adaptations has remained largely neglected. And yet, the filmic dimension of these books is particularly strong and the potential for broader scholarship remarkable. This is borne out not only by the genesis of *Lottie and Lisa* but also by the strong presence of filmic narratives in *Emil and the Detectives* and its sequel. In fact, one often has the impression that the books themselves were conceived from the very beginning to be used on many media platforms, which would explain why Kästner's children's books have almost magically attracted the attention of the film industry for almost a century now, with the various adaptations always reflecting the specific aesthetic of their times.

The different film adaptations reveal the changes in mentality and popular culture just as the novels themselves, so both can be viewed as historical documents of popular culture and be analyzed as such: with her gender-conscious focus on film theory and cinematographic narration, Zhang allows for a new, convincing reconstruction of gender aspects in children's film. Moreover, she addresses central questions of media change, transformation, and intermediality within the context of current scholarly debates on popular culture and children's

literature and thus opens up new perspectives on Kästner's otherwise intensively studied work. Zhang's analysis of the specific referential structures between premake and remake within the context of intermedial studies is truly original.

Zhang tends to have a somewhat one-sided focus on the story level concerning gender-specific character behavior and misses out on the many media-specific features of the film adaptation, which seem difficult to capture from this methodological vantage point. With a few exceptions, production and reception contexts, such as film programs, critical essays, or reviews, are not taken into consideration. Some of the detailed analyses are missing the time stamps. Despite a promising approach to the filmic portrayal of the characters, overall Zhang could have given more prominence to the film-specific formal qualities of the adaptations (such as film music, aesthetics, and cinematographic context).

Given that Kästner himself actively promoted the film adaptations of his children's books, it would have been relevant to describe his role in the original film adaptations, both as scriptwriter and collaborator, in relation to gender questions. Many questions still remain unanswered; however, the results of this precise, thoroughly researched, and readable study of the intertextual and intermedial references between the novels and their adaptations, with its particular attention to gender roles and changing notions of gender, deserves much credit and will surely foster future research.

Sebastian Schmideler
Universität Leipzig



Jutta Reusch studied German literature, linguistics and musicology at the Albert-Ludwigs-University in Freiburg/Breisgau and library and information science at the Humboldt-University in Berlin. After several years as an editor for a publishing house, she worked as a librarian for the German Literature Archive in Marbach. Since 2008, she works for the International Youth Library in the position of the head of library services, with a focus on collection-building of secondary literature for the research library, as well as building and curating the historical collections and archives. She manages the research library, the public children's library, and the library projects.

Call for *Bookbird* Issue 58.1 (January 2020)

School in Children's Literature & Children's Literature in School

Even though large numbers of young people are still denied access to education, schooling is a relatively common experience for children and adolescents across the world. As such, it is often depicted, visually and verbally, in children's and young adult fiction and nonfiction. At the same time, children's and young adult literature usually have a place in schools, classrooms, and school libraries. All of the above differ drastically, of course, depending on the diverse contexts in which they exist. *Bookbird* invites scholars from across the world to explore how school is encountered in diverse children's literature and/or how diverse schools engage with children's literature across the globe. The following inquiry questions are offered as suggestions in addition to ones you may have in mind:

School in Children's Literature

- In what ways has the "school story" been evolving as a genre, internationally, nationally, or locally?
- What are some motifs, stereotypes, challenges, or issues associated with education and school in children's books? How do child readers respond to them?
- What inclusive/exclusive educational practices are present in fictional renditions of schools?
- How are "good" or "bad" students, teachers, principals, schools, etc. textually and visually depicted in children's and YA books? What insights can be gained by analyzing these depictions?
- How do these depictions compare across cultures, languages, genres, age groups, and so on?
- What are fictional children's attitudes toward school and how do they compare to implied reader attitudes?
- What is the role of education in the lives of fictional characters or historical personalities?
- How do reading and writing feature in fiction and nonfiction for children and teens?
- What is the role of school libraries and/or librarians in stories for children?

Children's Literature in Schools

- How has the place of, and approach to, children's literature in the classroom been evolving in international/national/local educational systems?
- What does educational research and theory say about engaging children with books? What have been shown to be socially just and inclusive practices that lead to the development of lifelong readers and writers?
- What is the role of children's literature in literacy education, according to research?
- What is the place of children's literature across the curriculum, according to local and international research?
- How do students respond to relevant educational or reading promotion programs?
- What are the students'/teachers'/parents' and other stakeholders' attitudes toward children's literature and reading?
- How do school libraries and librarians/media specialists engage young readers with children's and young adult literature?

Full papers should be submitted to the editors, Petros Panaou (ppanaou@uga.edu) and Janelle Mathis (janelle.mathis@unt.edu) by **July 1, 2019**. Postcard manuscripts should be submitted to the Postcards editor, Barbara Lehman (lehman.1@osu.edu). For further information, please visit the *Bookbird* website at <http://www.ibby.org/bookbird>.

East Meets West

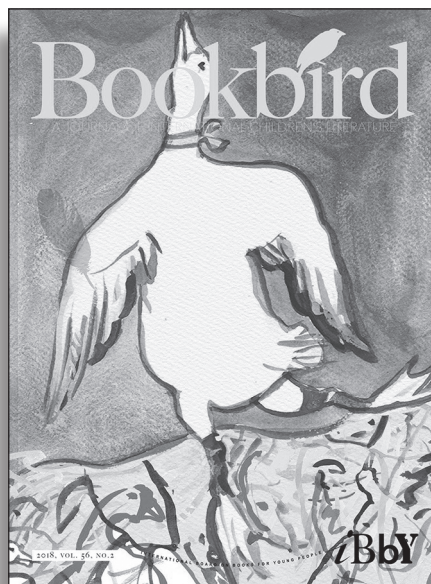
Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus are situated geographically, historically, and culturally at a crossroads. This is where Europe and Asia meet. It has been a place of conflict, but also of fruitful and beautiful exchange. Trade, ideas, and people have moved in both directions, creating diverse and multilayered societies. Today, the still unresolved situation in Cyprus awaits its political resolution. The ongoing refugee crisis, also looms large for people in these countries. The children's literature of the three countries often reflects this reality. Hence, it comes

as no surprise that intercultural competence and representing otherness are common topics and themes. How can people live peacefully side by side? How can children's literature be part of such a process? These are questions prompted by the historical experience of the people living in these countries. Some of the article authors get to grips with these issues.

We have Angela Yannicopoulou and Ilgım Ververi Alaca, who write about "The Representation of the Other in Illustrated Texts for Children: Turks in Greek Books and Greeks in Turkish Books." Kostas Magos talks about how to develop intercultural competence through "the neighbor's folktales." And the term "enclavement," which has long been used to refer to the experience of the few Greek-Cypriots who chose to stay in their homes/villages in the north after the forced division of the island, is picked up by Maria Chatzianastasi in her article about the cultural identity of young Cypriots. There is a great deal more in this rich Congress issue.

I am hugely indebted to Petros Panaou for his work on the Congress theme, for which he has also supplied an introduction to Greek children's literature. My warmest thanks also go to Gülçin Alpöge for her introduction to Turkish children's literature.

Björn Sundmark



Bookbird 4/2018

Diverse Approaches to Children's Literature

The final *Bookbird* issue of 2018 contains a wealth of articles from all over the world, and it features very diverse approaches to children's literature. Dipavali Debroy writes about "The Changing Treatment of Disability in Children's Literature in India," while Maryam Izadi analyzes "The Portrayal of Animals in Two Iranian Picturebooks." Further, we find articles on difficult topics, such as war, migration, displacement, and home in, for instance, Åsa Warnqvist's "Depictions of Flight from War in Contemporary Children's and YA Books Published in Sweden," and Geneviève Brisson's and Theresa Rogers's "Dis/placed in Canada: A Québécois Graphic Novel in Translation." Culture and language is also at the forefront in Marija Todorova's picturebook reading, "Into the Dark Woods: A Cross-Cultural Re-Imagination of Home," and in Beatrice Moja's "Sociolinguistic Reflections on Dickens's *A Holiday Romance* (1868)," as well as in Emily Petermann's analysis of cautionary nonsense verse, "The Child's Death as Punishment or Nonsense?" Finally, Luz Santa Maria offers up "Clashes of Modernity in Chilean Contemporary Young Adult Novels." Besides the feature articles, we find texts on the Irish author PJ Lynch, a teaching unit on Michael Rosen's *Sad Book*, and a longer text on "Creating Nations from Silent Books." Then there are postcards, of course, and Focus IBBY, with news from the wide world of IBBY. The beautiful cover is from the Yi-Ching Su's Letter "A Symphony of Poems and Pictures: Hwa-Jen Ho's Nonfiction Picturebooks about Wild Birds in Taiwan." Those words deserve to be repeated, I believe, and applied to this *Bookbird*, for it is a veritable symphony of words and pictures! Enjoy!



Björn Sundmark

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