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BOOKBIRD – A Journal of International Children's Literature

China Special



Bookbird special on Chinese children's literature

to celebrate the 30th IBBY world congress in China

history, literature, publishing wang xiaoming's illustrations science fiction for children lianhuanhua (comic books)

chen danyan and zhang zhi-lu write about writing jin bo's children's poetry qin wenjun's jia li and jia mei stories

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IBBY

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

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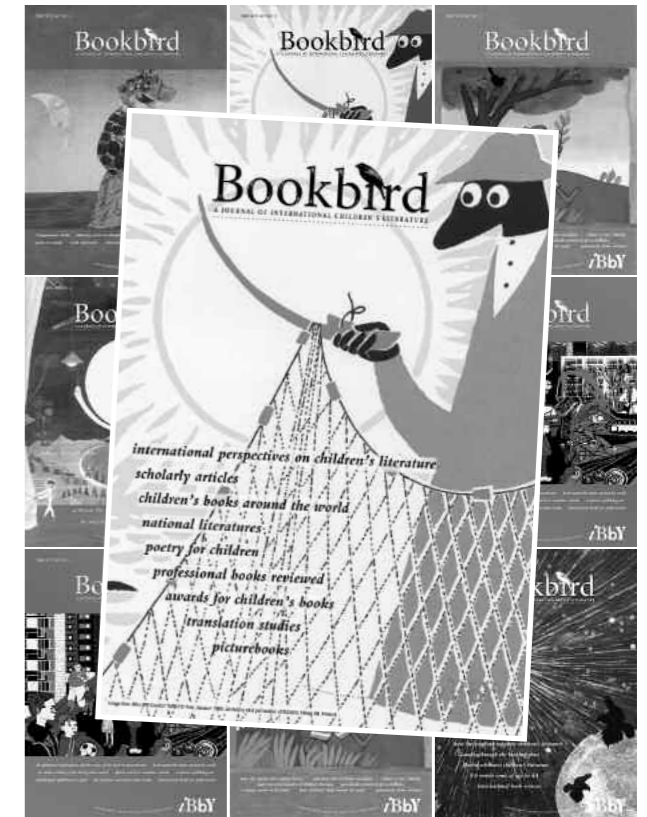
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Editorial

Ni hao!

When we started our hunt for material for this *Bookbird* special on China, we were setting out on a voyage of discovery with a compass but no map, not much idea of the lay of the land but a sense that there *was* land, if only we could train our spyglasses on the horizon for long enough and at the right angle. We also had a lot of support and good will from an array of friends and colleagues, acquaintances and strangers, contacts and contacts-of-contacts.

Slowly we gathered names and email addresses and as we gradually began to source and track down articles and materials, we grew more and more excited. The issue was beginning not only to take shape but to make sense. Our old friend Serendipity came on board, and we found that children's writers contributing articles were themselves being discussed in other articles; names cropping up in one place were also cropping up some place else; books mentioned in articles appeared in the postcard reviews; ideas and trends being discussed by one contributor were being discussed also by another contributor coming from an entirely

different starting point and with maybe quite a different interpretation.

This emerging convergence of thoughts and topics began to convince us that we were on to something. We'd done it – by a happy combination of research and chance, helpful contacts and sudden inspired moments of recognition, we'd discovered Chinese children's literature. Not all of it, no doubt, but a goodly chunk, we trust. We hadn't exactly stumbled upon it, since we knew all along that we'd been looking for it, but it did feel like a gift all the same, something hoped for but not fully expected, something we knew we wanted but couldn't exactly describe, though, like art, we knew it when we saw it.

To those readers lucky enough to be joining us at the 30th IBBY world congress, to be held in China in the autumn of this year, we offer this special issue as a sort of orientation course in Chinese children's literature. For those of you who will not have that opportunity, we hope this is some consolation and a chance to participate vicariously. And we hope also to reach many readers long after the congress is past and beyond the borders even of the IBBY world, readers who, like us just a little while ago, are eagerly looking for information and discussion about a literature that is both relatively new and relatively hidden but that is full of interest and developing apace.

We have divided the papers into sections that we hope help to make sense of the sheer volume and novelty of the material. Section one contains overview articles that set Chinese children's literature in a historical context and introduce a variety of names and titles; section two homes in on a range of specific genres and authors; and the last section again contains overview articles, this time with a focus on publishing and reaching out to readers.

Enjoy!

Bookbird editors

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Early-20th-century Chinese Children's Literature

Self, State and Story

• *The May Fourth (or New Culture) Movement brought about a flowering in Chinese children's literature, and in an atmosphere of vigorous critical activity, writers pursued their increased interest in Western ideas and translated material. This paper examines the remarkable cross-fertilisation in stories for young audiences that occurred as a result*

The cultural response to the May Fourth Movement has been compared (Hsia 1999) to European romanticism, in its interest in the vernacular, in child development and early education and in the expression of emotions. This period of revolutionary expression influenced literature for young audiences, as many writers looked to the Soviet Union and the West for models for debate; in several cases, study abroad had kindled a desire to redefine concepts of humanity and individualism.

'Saving' China

Merle Goldman (1977) argues that Lu Xun, Mao Dun and Guo Moruo, all major authors, shared the desire to 'save' China and integrate her into the modern world. The writers of this movement wanted to revitalise the traditional role of the writer as social reformer. For Mao Dun, any literary work reflected society, requiring

by MARIAN ALLSOBROOK



Dr Marian ALLSOBROOK has taught at second and third level and has contributed to both editions of the Routledge International Encyclopedia on Children's Literature

May Fourth Movement

This movement started as a response to the perceived injustice of the ceding of Chinese territories under the terms of the Versailles Treaty of 1919. The concessions to Japan in the north-eastern province of Shantung and the American recognition of Japan’s special interest in China were particularly contentious areas of concern. In the 1920s nationalist feeling was roused and demonstrations expressed revolutionary protest. The Communist Party in China was founded in 1921. On 30 May 1925, when a Chinese worker at a Japanese-owned cotton mill in Shanghai was killed, twelve demonstrators were shot, causing strikes and boycotts. Communist Party activists organised national worker and student responses.

an author to be familiar with the social background to be represented.

Lijun Bi’s study (2003) of the post-Mao period of children’s books in China opens with an acknowledgement of the radical nature of the May Fourth era, in ‘breaking away from Confucian ethics and recognising children as a group of independent human beings’. Significant changes to the old imperial examination system in China had already occurred; new scientific ideas and Western intellectual influences had been justified as valid areas for education. However, the spectacular cultural wealth of China’s artistic achievement existed as a treasury from which works for children could be sourced; eminent editors and writers debated the need for a canon of Chinese children’s literature, while the involvement of leading artists in pictorial narrative for young audiences aided the flowering of new works.

Supplements, magazines, comics

Farquhar’s (1999) important study of children’s books and illustration establishes just how substantial was the body of supplements and magazines for children which influenced attitudes and fed the huge audience’s enthusiasm for narrative.

Comic strip narratives, or comic books, were popular reading material, rented out from street stalls

Comic strip narratives, or comic books, were popular reading material, rented out from street stalls. Traditional folk tales and street opera (with its strongly visual impact) depicted action-packed heroic

adventures, which passed from oral or street performance into comic book form. In the early decades of the 20th century, translated texts became more numerous and the fertility of creative response to these, particularly to the stories of Hans Christian Andersen, can be seen in the stories for children written by Ye Shengtao (1894–1988), who published two collections of short stories for young audiences illustrated

by wood-cuts. Pen-work and cartoons further enriched the body of writing for young audiences (see for example Hayward Scott 1980, which contains examples of comic book art and other illustrated works for young audiences).

Ye Shengtao and other eminent writers edited, reworked and wrote material for newspaper supplements, further shaping popular tastes and interests. Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren produced translations and critiques of material for children. In 1935 twelve magazines for children, largely devoted to literature, were produced in Shanghai, a major publishing centre (see Farquhar 1999). The dynamic character of these early decades is reflected also in the linguistic changes sweeping in: the archaic and poetic language, *wen-yen*, gave way increasingly to journalists' preference for a more accessible medium, *pai-hua*, perceived as sufficiently literary, while more expressively equal to the challenge of communicating modern ideas. Hsia (1999) argues that Hu Shih, a major scholar of the period, eased *pai-hua* towards mainstream status by championing its use.

Western and Russian writers inspired Chinese reformers to emulate and rework stories. Ye Shengtao's rendering of Andersen's 'The Emperor's New Clothes' gave the moment of clear-eyed realism to the general populace, rather than to one innocent child, as the emperor passed by in his nakedness. (Children, however, feature prominently in his other stories, such as 'The Scarecrow' and 'The Experience of a Locomotive'.)

While the inherent power of the people was being promoted, there was also debate about the role of Chinese children's literature in society; the interest in the potential of the short story (which allowed individualistic expression alongside treatment of class consciousness and socio-economic forces) made it the distinctive generic form of the May Fourth Movement. Linguistic reforms of transliteration and script simplification also brought about renewal in literature after 1915.

While the inherent power of the people was being promoted, there was also debate about the role of Chinese children's literature in society

Women writers

Among female writers, Hsia (1999) singles out Bing Xin and Ling Shuhua, popular in the 1920s. Bing Xin, whose writing foregrounds sensibility and emotional integrity, became very popular as a short story writer in the second decade of the last century, especially for her 'Ji Xiao Duzhe' [Letters to young readers]. These first appeared in the supplement 'The World of Children', issued by *The Morning Post*. She was also a poet, noted for her feminised writing on themes of loss,

maternal love, innocence and humanitarianism. For her, golden memories of love belonged to childhood. In her poems she used free form; the absence of rhyme made them very different from classical Chinese poetry. Yang (1998) illustrates the attention paid by a writer to a child's emotional response in the epigraph she chooses from a story by Bing Xin, 'Ji Yijian Zui Nanwang de Shiqing' [Recalling a most memorable event]. Described by Yang as venerable and anthologised in later decades as exemplary, Bing Xin has nevertheless suffered critical neglect in the West.

Bing Xin's 'Letters' gave young Chinese readers a glimpse of a Western country and its way of life :

The chronological structure of 'Letters' stems from Bing Xin's three-year stay in the United States (1923–6), exploring impressionistic experiences of

landscapes, homesickness and illness, climate and city life. The letters gave young Chinese readers a glimpse of a Western country and its way of life. Farquhar (1999) considers that Bing Xin idealises childhood as a state of wisdom and innocence damaged by maturation; Wordsworthian and lyrical sympathies are certainly present in the text. For Bing Xin, nature, landscape and mood may merge and fuse. Subjective response and nuance prevail over social analysis, while the mother-child bond is celebrated as a cosmic force. Prusek (quoted in Farquhar) called her a 'doll in an ivory tower', which does less than justice to her mastery of the vernacular form. Neglect of her output highlights the inadequacy of critical attention paid to female perspectives and new sensibilities during this period.

Ling Shu-hua is praised by Hsia for her understanding of the complex Chinese female psychology masked by a submissive appearance and her acute analysis of the female experience amidst social change, particularly in *Hua zhi si* [Temple of flowers] (1928). He regrets that she has also suffered obscurity, partly because of her small output.

The heroic style

This early phase of the modern period, perceived as 'passive' romanticism by the revolutionary writers of children's stories, shifted around 1921, yielding ground to an 'active' or heroic style of narrative, which drew on

After 1921 came an 'active' or heroic style of narrative, which drew on folk tale and a strong commitment to social change :

folk tale and a strong commitment to social change. Lu Xun was a leading theorist of this movement. Like most writers, he lived and worked in Shanghai. While writers expressed a desire to rouse workers to recognise the power of the masses and seek education as a route to fulfilment, these ideas were at first muted in children's literature.

In 1928, Guo Moruo's *Yizhi Shou* [Only one hand] portrays a heroic teenage factory worker in Shanghai, drawing on real-life experience and calling for unity in the workers' movement. Zhang Tianyi's *Da Lin he Xiao Lin* [Big Lin and Little Lin] (1936) depicts a worker who struggles against an 'Ogre', an imperialist agent. Little Lin actively challenges the 'Ogre' and wins.

Su Su's *Xiao Jianxi* [The little traitor] (1940) presents a boy tricked into spying for traitors, but redeemed by heroic endeavour. Su Su was a major contributing editor to the Juvenile Publishing House, which had started by producing small pamphlet magazines for children as part of the patriotic effort.

Mao and the ideological role of children's literature

During these years Mao Zedong was gaining power, establishing a rural base for debate in Yan'an as a counterpart to the urban pre-eminence of Shanghai, with its largely urban child audience. Writers began to target young rural audiences, representing peasant boy heroes bold enough to challenge both Japanese and treacherous Chinese. Yang (1998) considers the way in which children's literature in China was shaped by the ideological function it was deemed to serve: positive role models were favoured, promoting the collective good of society. Approved writers for children were cited as offering examples of work to be emulated, while others suffered critical obscurity. Farquhar (1999) lists the prize-winning writers for children issued in the thirties and discusses state measures in the mid-century under Mao Zedong intended to organise children's literature. Anthologies of the best examples of writing for children began at this point and continued.

In 1942, at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, Mao Zedong sought to merge literature

with the war effort. One effect of the guidelines in his text was that art and literature were now seen as ideological weapons; the importance of both text and pictorial narrative was recognised. Creative work had to be accessible. Traditional art forms, intelligible to the masses, were cited as ideal examples.

Pictorial narrative

The comic book is seen as an indigenous art form in China, stretching back to the serial pictures of the Wei dynasty. Farquhar (1999) believes that the early modern comic book was originally intended for a child audience and then appropriated for the purposes of mass education. Certainly the popularity of the comic book as a revolutionary cultural product was a significant contribution to the development of Chinese children's books and often fertilised by the vitality of street opera characters. These characters found their way into the comic book. A further strength was the response of progressive artists who were attracted to work as illustrators in this genre.

The power of pictorial narrative in China is acknowledged in the choice of the comic book as the theme of the inaugural exhibition by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum in 2000. Indeed, the cover of the commemorative publication of comic book art illustrations issued by the museum for that exhibition (Hong Kong Heritage Museum 2000) shows a street stall renting out comic books. Three children are avidly studying a rented book, while behind them other stories available for hire are pegged up. Mao Dun had written in 1932 that the comic book could be exploited to reach mass audiences. Critical articles discussed the genre and in 1936 Mao Dun's children's story, *Da Bizhi de Gushi* [Big nose], featured a character who loves such street stall books.

Children's books cited

BING Xin (1943) *Xiao-shuo chi* [Collected stories] Shanghai: K'ai-ming

YE Shengtao (1949) *Collected Short Stories* Shanghai: K'ai-ming

ZHANG Leping (1947) *Sanmao liulangji xuanji* [Sanmao: An orphan on the streets] republished in 1988 by Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (originally published in a cartoon strip in the newspaper *Xiaoshenbao*, Shanghai, 1935)

Sanmao

One of the most famous comic-book stories was Zhang Leping's 'Sanmao'. The street child came to life in Zhang Leping's drawings as a result of the author's observation of such youngsters and his conversations with them. (Farquhar (1999) refers to the hundreds of thousands of orphaned street children in Shanghai before 1949.) Their life-stories provided him with his narrative material. Zhang Leping reported that he always consulted his own children as readers and discussion of his stories with young audiences always influenced his work.



Sanmao

'Sanmao' became the most famous example of the genre, evolving through several versions. The 1947 version, 'An orphan on the streets', opens with the child's realisation that while creatures are nurtured by parents, he has to fend for himself. His inherent compassion and kindness prevail, even in harsh circumstances: taken to a cinema by a more fortunate boy, Sanmao bursts into tears when he sees poignant scenes depicted on the screen. The power of the images moves him, as children in real life were moved by Zhang Leping's stories of Sanmao, to the extent that they too saw no distinction between reality and the images in the comic book. They gave clothing and offered food to the artist, to help Sanmao in his difficulty. Indeed, Farquhar (1999) quotes the playwright Xia Yan as writing (in 1950) that Sanmao was 'not an abstract creation of the artist's brush but a real flesh-and-blood child of misery who incites pity and love'.

This young hero's inner life of dreams and aspirations significantly contributes to the success of the character. Like Harry Potter, Sanmao has to sleep in the cupboard under the stairs at one point, where he dreams of receiving a gift. This appears to be a fur coat, which, as he unwraps it, turns into a snarling tiger. Sanmao wakes to find a snapping cat on his chest. Very often his dreams shift alarmingly in this way as he is brought back to an unwelcome reality. Dreaming in prison of a happier life, of

***Like Harry Potter, Sanmao
has to sleep in the
cupboard under the stairs*** :

domestic security and educational opportunity, he seems to hear the school bell shattering his dream of carefree play, as he wakes to the sound not of the bell but of the guard's truncheon beating against the prison

bars. The comforting dream of his mother's tears, as she weeps to see his bruises after he has served as contortionist for a brutal master, is transformed into the reality of raindrops soaking Sanmao, who has no shelter from the elements. Even when he is not working to earn his living, there is no relief for him anywhere.

Most of the frames are set four to a page, depicting the energy of street life, but some large single page illustrations are used. Sanmao, the outsider, is shown at one despairing moment outside the windows of a large house, where he can see families feasting and conversing. His role as a sharp observer of human nature is conveyed in the many moments when he is looking through a window, at a cinema screen or shop front, a poster or imagined alternative to his street existence. As Sanmao has to make sense of what he observes if he is to survive, so the comic-book reader has to make sense of what is captured in each frame of the pictorial narrative.

Writers acted radically to establish a canon of Chinese children's literature :

The better life, imagined in dreams or briefly glimpsed, is associated with the new communist China; the young hero repeatedly intervenes when others need help. The narrative entertains the reader by depicting Sanmao's well-meaning attempts to earn money by trying baby care, kitchen work and street deliveries. He works as a shoe-shine boy and even as a pavement contortionist. Pickpockets, felons and tricksters teach him harsh lessons and finally he is shown, a tiny central figure, alone and disillusioned, amidst a frantic street scene of adult conflict, violence and hatred.

Comic books like 'Sanmao' were hugely popular with mass audiences, including children. The political significance of pictorial narrative prompted intellectual debate about the genre,

which by the early 1930s had taken its classic form of small booklets called 'lianhuanhua', printed on newsprint.

Hsia (1999) reminds readers of the significance of the May Fourth Movement: the dual concern of the 20th-century writer, after 1919, with the self and the nation. Through the medium of satirical and humanitarian realism, progressive literary objectives might be fulfilled. Hsia identifies the belief in realism and in the 'universality of love and sympathy that transcend classes' as intellectual luxuries which put many writers at odds with the Chinese Communist Party.

They acted radically to promote the use of the vernacular, to widen horizons by looking to Soviet and European material, to establish a canon of Chinese children's literature and sustain debate on a range of topics, including the comic book. These initiatives were quickened by linguistic changes, educational reform, widespread distribution of urban publications and relocation of many writers to rural areas. The achievement of this movement was considerable. Further study will illuminate the cultural shifts which shaped narratives for young audiences in China during the early decades of the 20th century.

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Yao, a talented basketball player, lives with his brother's girlfriend, Liao, awaiting his brother's return. Yao's brother, Lung, a legendary player in college basketball leagues, disappeared after a mysterious car accident. Yao, who shares his brother's skill, begins an adventurous college experience. He encounters intra-college competition, college basketball leagues and even the street ball gang league. We see Yao perfect his skill as a basketballer and join him as he discovers the truth of the accident. The 'Three point shooter' series has led to basketball mania amongst Hong Kong teenagers. On one hand, the fantasised and dramatised game scenes have attracted many young 'maddballers' to read; on the other hand, the portrayal of relationships involving friendship and love appeals to many schoolgirls. This fast-moving story with its mix of mystery and sports is categorised as a 'neo-adventure' novel in Hong Kong.

Paul Lee



Tinhong

SAN FEN QIU SHE SHOU – DI SI JI

[Three point shooter – episode 4]

*Hong Kong: Tinhong Press 2005 298pp
ISBN 9889784432 (fiction, 12+)*

'You are my messenger. Look at everything. Remember.' This is what Grandma Nai Nai tells 11-year-old Xiao Mei, as the half-Chinese girl from Ohio heads off to Shanghai. Fear that her Chinese relatives will not accept her proves groundless as she is warmly embraced by her extended family and happily immersed in daily living in Shanghai. Brief chapters in lyrical free verse relate Xiao Mei's experience from a child's perspective. The story tells of adventure, self-discovery and the realisation that the strong bonds of family can transcend both thousands of miles and cultural distances.

Ed Young, a native of China now living in the US, is a highly versatile, much honoured illustrator. He received the Caldecott Medal in 1990 and Caldecott Honors in 1993 and 1989. Here he uses a red Chinese grillwork to frame illustrations that follow and embellish the story in a style that echoes the childlike viewpoint of the narrative. Home in Ohio, Xiao writes to thank her relatives for their hospitality. The pictures she includes, of her relatives sharing a meal in Shanghai, are rendered in a child's style and include Xiao Mei's carefully-executed Chinese characters for 'thank you'.

Glenna Sloan



Andrea CHENG and Ed YOUNG

Shanghai Messenger

New York: Lee and Low 2005 32pp

ISBN 1584302380

(picturebook/fiction, 8–12)

Trends in Chinese Youth Culture and Literature

by CHEN DANYAN

(translated (from German) by Siobhán Parkinson)



CHEN Danyan was one of the first Chinese writers to write for and about teenagers. She has won several awards in China and Europe for her work and a UNESCO Prize for Peace and Tolerance for her novel 'About a girl' (1992, also known as 'Nine lives'; published in German as Ein Mädchen). Her most recent books are for adults

• In comparison with the youth literature of
• Europe, for example, Chinese children's
• literature is still very young. In this article,
• which blends historical overview and
• personal experience, one of China's leading
• writers for young people in the 20th century
• considers the development of Chinese
• literature for the young

No history of youth literature in Confucian China

Y outh literature is not native to Chinese culture. Indeed, Confucius said, 'Young people are not human; they are merely in the process of becoming human.' So it is hardly surprising that historically there have been no literary works created especially for children in China, though there have been plenty of texts intended to educate the young, for example, 'Three character verse primers' or 'Instructions for girls'.

***'Young people are not human; they are
merely in the process of becoming
human.'* – Confucius**

After the Opium Wars, Chinese intellectuals wanted to help China to modernise and achieve prosperity. As a result of the important 'Fourth of May' cultural movement early in the 20th century, which had enormous influence on Chinese history, intellectuals determined, for the first time, to free Chinese culture of Confucian traditions. This movement led to the abandonment of classical Chinese as the language of literature, and its replacement by colloquial Chinese. The Fourth of May movement influenced not only literature, of course, but also made its mark on politics and culture. Under the influence of this cultural movement, China began to produce a native children's literature.

Beginnings of Chinese children's literature

After 1920, Chinese literature was heavily dominated by the situation of Chinese society and by Chinese traditions. The new children's literature was seen as having a major role in educating children. Another important function was to reveal the conditions

under which children lived. For example, works such as ‘Straw man’ and ‘Miss Alice’ were supposed to raise children’s awareness. Neither of these kinds of works for children could really be considered true children’s literature.

Chinese society experienced a long period of discord in the first half of the 20th century, and if literature needs a stable environment in which to flourish, then Chinese children’s literature is a good example of how it does not flourish under adverse circumstances.

China became increasingly interested in Western culture, and this desire for Western knowledge permeated children’s literature. The Western classics – for example, *Peter Pan*, *The Water Babies* and *Alice in Wonderland* – were translated, and the best translators of the time were engaged on this work. Such translations, which were widely available, provided Chinese writers with models and Chinese children with an appropriate diet.

First ‘golden age’: 1950–66

It was only after the end of the war against Japan and of the Chinese civil war, with the coming to power of the Communist Party (1949) in mainland China, that the country finally came to enjoy a period of relative peace. From 1950 onwards, Chinese children’s literature experienced unprecedented development. Between 1950 and 1966, good children’s novels, fairy tales, stories, prose writings and plays all appeared, and children’s literature finally developed and matured. China could now boast its own excellent writers, editors, publishing houses, magazines and newspapers.

***From 1950 onwards, :
Chinese children’s :
literature experienced :
unprecedented development :***

Works from those 16 years featured contemporary child characters. They were clearly influenced by the time: earnest, frugal, active, keen to raise political awareness and with a gentle view of children. So for example we have ‘Da Ling and Xiao Ling’ which perfectly combines political awareness with childlike humour, and equally excellent books such as ‘The secret of the precious pumpkin’ and ‘Ma Liang’s magic pencil’. Also worthy of mention are the fairy tales of Yan Wen Ging about bamboo flutes, which display a wistful, melancholy mood and the humorous children’s novels of the Ren brothers. Works like these are in stark contrast to the didactic stance of traditional books for children, and try instead to see the world through children’s eyes. Best of all are the stories of Ren Rong Rong and Ke Yan. These mature works have lively characters and show great empathy with children. Finally children took centre stage in well-structured and amusing stories.

At this time, Chinese literature, including that for children, was heavily influenced by Soviet literature. Russian child psychology was also influential, and authors used lifelike characters to deal with problems. But they neglected one important thing: the traditional attitudes of the time prevented writers from dealing with sensitive issues in the emotional lives of children. It was an idealistic period, and the whole society strove to be pure and exemplary people. The social reality of the time encouraged writers to dream of purity and to present life as more beautiful than it really is.

Stagnation in the Cultural Revolution: 1966–76

In the ten years after 1966, the Cultural Revolution held sway. In this period, China’s youth literature stagnated. Both adults and children read the sayings of Mao. I grew up at that time

myself, and can vouch for it. I longed to read books, but there were no real books to be had. One day, I found a manual called ‘The barefoot doctor’s medical vademecum’. It was very interesting. Various illnesses were described and treatments and prescriptions were given. And from that point, I came under literary influence, for that book was richly literary. It described illnesses very realistically and precisely. For example, if a patient is suffering from diphtheria, the tongue is swollen like *yang mai* berries, an excellent literary image.

I still owe this book a lot.

In the latter part of the Cultural Revolution, works such as ‘The story of the Xiang Yang court’ and ‘The newly arrived Xiao Shizhu’ and ‘Open wide your eyes’ and other short novels appeared. Leaving aside the inevitable political allusions, they do echo the lively realistic style of the 1950s. These are mature works in the socialist realist tradition, and they were popular with readers and were influential.

***: I longed to read books,
: but there were no real
: books to be had***

New ‘golden age’: 1980–90

The 1980s were a golden age for Chinese children’s literature, comparable to that of the 1950s. At this time in China, freedom of thought was allowed, and the whole country got out from under the yoke of radical left thought. For the second time since the Fourth of May movement, China opened its doors to the world. Many influences such as philosophy, psychology, new literary movements and artistic ideas poured into China. They influenced the thoughts, the lives and the attitudes of a new generation of authors and artists.

In those ten years, Chinese children’s literature was also radically changed through the influence of Sigmund Freud, whose work started to be published in great numbers in China. Freud’s writings had an influence on many young writers and artists, and functioned as a compass for the culture of the time. Freud’s studies of children’s behaviour and the influence of childhood on people’s lives heavily influenced Chinese children’s literature and brought about an awareness of the importance of childhood.

In Chinese thinking, children’s literature is more or less seen as having a didactic function. Children’s novels have always tended to have educational themes, for example, how does a child behave as a good person, how can he be useful to society as a person, how can she be a dutiful child to her parents? All the writer is supposed to do is to insert education into literature. It’s like sugaring the pill so that children don’t taste the bitter medicine. Even in the best work of the 1950s, writers

***In recent times writers
have begun to realise
that children's literature
can express children's
actual lives*** :

did not draw a clear line between education and representation. It is only in recent times, under the influence of Freud's theories, that writers

have begun to realise that children's literature can express children's actual lives, and that children's books that are not dedicated to the formation of the young are indeed children's literature.

These writers of the 1980s were themselves children of the Cultural Revolution. What they experienced in their childhood during those troubled times itself

reflects Freud's view that childhood experiences affect one's whole adult life. Their childhood experiences and the theories of Freud have led writers of this generation to value the individual and personal experience.

And so we find in their work such themes as the pressures that society, the educational system and parents exert on children. They began to touch on themes that have to do with emotional crises and which in the past had never been directly described. 'The teacher from the village' is an example of such a book, as are many stories by Ding Ahu, where this is attempted for the first time. Many similar new works followed, such as novels by Chen Wen, Xia Youzhi, Cheng Xingang, Cao Wenxuan and others.

My own work

At this time, I myself had just finished my studies and was working as a fiction editor in a magazine publishing house. My company was one of the most important experimental publishing houses for new literature. I was personally inspired by translations of Freud and began to publish myself.

My main themes were always my experiences as a young person, and how these had influenced my life. I wrote about the world in which children live, through a child's eyes. It could be called a kind of self-representation, a creative practice that is closely involved with my self. I'm not interested in educating anyone; I don't think writers have the right to take on such a responsibility. The stories I wrote were based on incidents that occurred when I was an adolescent. I described the inner turmoil of the individual during this period. I showed how children's environments affect children. I am, I suppose, a typical child of the children's literature of the 1980s. I belong to that restless, searching time in which a new Chinese children's literature appeared: youth literature.

Before this time, there had only been children's literature for children under 12, but in the 1980s, Chinese children's and youth literature became a fully developed genre of literature.

A radical change in childhood

The one-child policy that was brought in at the beginning of the 1980s has wrought a sea-change in Chinese life. By the end of the 1980s, children's writers knew that their readers would all be only-children, and would not share the childhood experiences of writers who came from families of more than one child.

At the same time, China had radically changed, from a planned to a market economy, and the country was developing from an agricultural to an industrial society, which meant that the way of life of the people also changed. In the past, three or four generations of a family lived together, but in the 1990s most families became nuclear families. Grandparents no longer lived with their children and grandchildren: every couple had their own home.

With economic development and urbanisation, large families were replaced by small ones, which effected a huge shift in living arrangements. Only-children now play with other children only at home, and not in the garden of a large family dwelling. In fact, few children get to play together at all.

***When there is change :
in society, there is :
always unease :***

When there is change in society, there is always unease, and a strong tendency not to trust others. Children in particular need to be protected, and so almost every child is now warned not to speak to strangers. A child must not open the door to a stranger or go out alone to play, but must stay at home while their parents are out. In fact, this new generation of only-children are often confined to their homes, unless their parents take them out someplace. The child is surrounded by the adult

world, and the world of children gets narrower and even starts to become confused with the adult world. The borders of the child's world in China have been destroyed, and the whole society is disoriented with regard to children. Nobody knows how they develop, what they are capable of, what goes on in their heads, because no adult has any experience from their own childhood that can help them to judge what is going on for this new phenomenon of only-children.

This generation will of course have a serious influence on the Chinese tradition. The influence of this new cultural movement will be even more extensive than that of the Fourth of May movement, for the living conditions of this generation have shaken the foundations of Chinese tradition. In the case of the Fourth of May movement, it was a question of literary language; now it's about family structures and beliefs.

China has always been a country where children are not highly valued. There may have been a Chinese children's literature in 1910–20, but the disregard for children by the masses had not disappeared. But when a family only has one child, then the child is highly prized. She becomes the nucleus of the so-called nuclear family. There's a graphic phrase for it: only-children are the most important planets in the system, and all other planets must rotate around this planet.

The only-child society completely contradicts Chinese tradition, for this tradition operates on the principle, 'the more children, the more luck'. Everyone in China has been influenced by this tradition. In the past, the worst curse you could wish on a person was that they would have no children or grandchildren. Now people can have only one child, and so that child is the most important thing.

For a long time, this has been a source of worry, and all sorts of predictions have been

made about how these children will turn out. Many people have studied this problem, but the only result has been a resounding echo.

Authors dismayed and unsure

Chinese children's literature is now confronted with a singular dilemma. Colleagues from other countries can probably empathise with it, but they are not in a position to offer us any experience.

I have contact with many only-children in connection with my work, and I have been deeply impressed by the differences I perceive, in talking to children, between the childhood experiences of these children and my own childhood. There is a huge hidden gulf between their generation and ours, and this gulf constitutes the greatest challenge since the birth of Chinese children's literature. I believe that I should try, in creating my work, to give expression in my texts to their experiences of childhood.

And so, instead of producing freely imagined work, I have started to try to describe this world of childhood that is completely different from

***Chinese children's writers
today are unsure of
themselves in relation to
their readers*** :

my own. At the same time, I continue to write my novels, which conform much more closely with my own experiences.

The most pressing problem of Chinese children's writers today is that they are unsure of themselves in relation to their readers. Nobody knows what the children are thinking; nor do they know what kinds of books are suitable for them. Children's writers feel useless. Not only is literature in itself weak, directionless and fragmented in the face of the situation in China today, but literature has additional problems of its own: television and the computer are destroying traditional reading habits, and if these problems are not addressed, by the time this generation of only-children comes to adulthood, children will no longer be bothering with literature. People who are dissatisfied with the current situation of children's literature can only hope that when the first generation of only-children has grown up, writers will emerge from among them whose work may be accepted by children.

***Works by young people
describing their lives
quickly became a lively
and lucrative genre*** :

New phenomenon: young writers

In the year 2000 a book called 'Three gates' (sometimes referred to as 'The third way') written by a 17-year-old only-child, Han Han, fulfilled this hope. He had no interest in being a successful student, as society

demanded. He left school early, and published a novel which sold well in China and has brought in 1.5 million yuan. The print run has far exceeded that of other children's and youth books and it is still available in the bookshops.

In this book, a boy is described who has doubts about his teachers. He rejects schooling and disputes everything that happens in life. He has a dark and depressed outlook and this is how he passes his adolescence. The book displays an outlook and a value system that is completely different from that in the usual youth literature. When the book was published, most of the purchasers were lads of the author's age. It's very popular with young people, though adults have their reservations about it.

After this book appeared, works by young people describing their lives quickly became a lively and lucrative genre, and every year, one or two novels by young people of 16 to 20 are published. They have found a market, and attracted readers. Publishers recognise the great commercial potential, and have invested money and effort in these books, and sales usually amount to hundreds of thousands of copies; some sell more than a million copies. On the other hand, children's books generally do not sell more than ten thousand copies. While youth literature of this type is popular and attractive, traditional children's and youth literature is overshadowed.

There has been constant debate over the past few years about whether these books by young authors are literature or not. Some writers like this kind of youth literature. They hope that the young authors, with support, can raise their standards. But others believe it's not literature at all and its mere existence and distribution is destroying traditional children's literature.

In the past, children's authors expected that only-children would one day express their innermost thoughts, and in this way their life could be accurately reflected; but now that this

***Books are being read: it's
just that young people are
making their own choices
about what they read*** :

has actually happened, the books, though hailed by their authors' contemporaries, trigger only alarm in adults.

Before the appearance of work of this type, young people were reading less and less. One suggested reason for this is the widespread availability of PCs and televisions; another is that the educational system in China leaves children no time to read. In any case, reading on paper is certainly disappearing, and young people are tending not to read. At the same time, the high circulation of books written by young authors shows that books are being read: it's just that young people are making their own choices about what they read.

A literature in transition

Chinese children's literature is in transition. It is looking for its own identity: does it belong to education or to society or is it duty-bound to its readers? It has gone beyond educational literature and it has survived the realistic literature of socialism. Now it is trying to find its footing.

In the search for its identity, translated children's literature will be a powerful point of reference. The best tradition of Chinese children's literature is that, since time immemorial, certain professional translators have set themselves the task of bringing excellent children's literature from overseas to Chinese children. The numbers are high, the levels of popularity good. In this way, an important segment of Chinese children's literature is guaranteed. It is perhaps a peculiar phenomenon in the children's literature of the world.

This story is set in semi-rural contemporary China. Long-Long accompanies his grandfather to market in order to sell their bicycle-drawn cart load of cabbages. The proceeds of the sale will finance the family's Spring Festival celebrations, enabling them to buy the necessary provisions: spices, rice, flour, cooking oil, firecrackers, lucky words like *fu* painted on red paper and a huge salted fish which they tie to the handlebars of the bicycle. It is a simple story beautifully told. The language is fresh — 'The lady gave Long-Long a big lipstick smile' — and the intelligent choice of words creates images of a culturally rich, vibrant, bustling community.

Stunning illustrations by He Zhihong, on traditional yellow rice paper, work in perfect harmony with the text. The detail is fascinating: people exercising in the park, bicycles everywhere, live poultry for sale in the market with their heads poking out of bags, caged birds hanging on trees in the park, women sitting side saddle on the padded carriers of bicycles. A wordless double page spread of the parade speaks volumes. The book ends with an explanation of the origins of the Spring Festival and explains some Chinese words in the story. This book has great integrity, informing with pride but without didacticism or pedantry.

Irene Barber



Catherine GOWER (HE Zhihong illus)

Long-Long's New Year

London: Frances Lincoln 2005 32pp ISBN 1845073991
(picturebook/ fiction, 5–8)

During the early part of the 20th century, Chinese immigrants on the Pacific coast of America struggled to keep the ancient art of Chinese opera alive. In an extraordinarily beautiful book, illustrations in muted colours executed in oils on textured canvas manage to convey an air of nostalgia with realistic imagery of this long-ago time. The story centres on motherless Wei, whose father and grandfather are singers in the traditional opera, where men play female roles because women are not allowed to perform. Wei, whose grandfather has coached him, helps his father perform a female part before one of the last performances of the opera company. The government has stopped Chinese immigration and audiences are shrinking. Many older singers have retired to China.

Gently, amidst great beauty, readers learn history as they share a timeless story of a father and son's supportive love. In addition, as the book jacket suggests, the reader experiences through the story 'the painful transition that Chinese communities endured adapting to the New World, while trying to keep their own culture alive'.

Glenna Sloan



Paul LEE (Jan Peng WANG illus)

A SONG FOR BA

Toronto: Groundwood 2004 29pp

ISBN 0888994923

(picturebook/historical fiction, 8–12)

Chinese Children's Literature in the 21st Century

by TANG RUI



TANG Rui is a critic of children's literature, assistant editor-in-chief of the China Fine Arts Publishing Group and an associate professor of Beijing Normal University. She is the author of several books on children's literature, one of which has won a government award

In this article Tang Rui identifies two tendencies in writing for children in China in recent years: one school of thought, led by Cao Wenxuan, tries to develop young people's spiritual lives and aesthetic sensibilities; the other is more market-driven and responds to the demands of young readers for entertainment

At the end of the 19th century, Western literature in translation – including the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen – came into China, and undoubtedly they deeply influenced modern Chinese children's literature. Chinese students of the history of children's literature identify the short fairy tale 'The little white boat' by Ye Shengtao (1921) as the first piece of children's literature in modern Chinese.

Four periods in the 20th century

In the 20th century, there were four periods of Chinese children's literature. The first of these, 1921–49, was a time of turbulence in



China, when the subjects of mercy and virtue gave way to those of conflict and revolution. In the second period, 1949–65, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, more writers for children emerged and most of their works showed youngsters' bright and prosperous life at school and at home and described them growing up and overcoming their children's weakness.

***Debate raged in the 20th
century about whether
children's literature should
educate children or reflect
human reality*** :

The third period was the time of the Great Cultural Revolution, 1966–76, a time when there was almost no children's literature. From 1977 until the 1990s, the passion of Chinese writers, which had been suppressed for ten years, came bursting out and children's literature began to flourish. The generation of younger writers who grew up during the Cultural Revolution, and who had been forced by the political system to do very hard work on leaving school, now became the leading children's writers, and they had a very different valuation of life and literary conception from the pre-Cultural Revolution generation.

Debate raged at this time about whether children's literature should educate children or reflect human reality; whether the essence of children's literature is instructional or aesthetic; whether children's literature should go along with childish superficiality or pursue artistic profundity; whether children's literature should disclose the seamy side of life, and so on. In this period, the subjects of children's literature expanded into many fields of real life, its themes dug deep into humanity and writing styles were diverse. The old restrictions were broken up and

new exploration and experiment emerged. This was a prosperous period for children's literature.

However, Chinese children's literature was shocked by the commercial tidal wave that occurred in the 1990s; and it became dispirited for several years. This so-called downturn meant that many excellent authors for children changed direction. For example, after 1998 Chen Danyan (the author of a trilogy on girl students at high school) turned to writing mainly about the life of adults and stories about Shanghai's history; Cheng Wei, who was the author of 'The red hair clip', went abroad in the 1990s; and Lao Chen who wrote 'Daughter's river' went into business.

The 'Harry Potter' effect

In 1999, the Chinese translation of the first Harry Potter book was published and was a great marketing success. It stimulated Chinese authors of children's literature, and many Chinese publishers' eyes glittered too. They began thinking about how to push children's literature through marketing. And so there was a surge in children's literature in China during the first couple of years of the 21st century.

But there were other influences also: the internet, the growth of a visual culture, entertainment and marketing. The tide of information coming from the internet is having more and more influence on people's lives in this commercially competitive time, and the world is becoming more and more crowded and restless. One of the undesirable consequences of the visual era we live in today is that people are skimming rather than reading; their eyes are consuming large numbers of beautiful pictures instead of reading and thinking about the characters. Entertainment is what people want in these consumerist times, and reading has to compete for people's leisure time.

A literary aesthetic

Two distinctly different standpoints have emerged recently, and Chinese children's literature has evolved two tendencies. The first of these is that some authors worry about the bad effect on children and young people of the current internet culture, and so they insist that children's literature has a responsibility to improve the spiritual life of children and they promote a classic and elegant style of writing for children. We can see this tendency in the works of those top children's writers who began to be well known in the 1980s and still write for children today, particularly Cao Wenxuan, who was nominated in 2003 by CBBY for the Hans Christian Andersen Author Award, and has been the winner of about twenty important awards in the field of children's literature and screenplays since the 1980s. His series of fictions about children growing up attracted public attention to this author, and he has become a great favourite with many magazines and newspapers in recent years. His characters are mostly teenagers from poor areas of the countryside. He describes how their emotions fluctuate during adolescence and how they overcome their problems, based mainly on his own experience in his early years. Cao has been insisting on the classical aesthetic style in children's literature and he has won great appreciation from both the public and government.

Zhang Zhi-Lu, also a CBBY nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Author Award (nominated in 2005), is one of the most well-known authors of children's literature in China. His 'Thunderbolt Baby' and 'The third legion' were adapted into movies in the 1990s and his science fiction novel 'Illegal intelligence' was granted the fifth Chinese Writers' Association's Children's Literature Award and the sixth Song Qing Ling Children Literature Award in 2003. This is a science fantasy in which a middle-aged scientist, a boy and a girl in high school become involved in a mysterious criminal plot named 'Ladybug'. An evil organisation wants to control the whole

Some authors insist that children's literature has a responsibility to improve the spiritual life of children

'Bronze and Sunflower' by Cao Wenxuan



world by transplanting some pieces of miniature digital core into the most intelligent teenagers' brains. The novel describes teenagers' colourful life in high school and their problems growing up. Zhang has perfect writing skill and his style is a blend of suspense, adventure and serious themes. He expresses his thoughts about the future of science and society through his science fiction, as well as depicting the complicated relations of social life.

Jin Bo (formerly Wang Jin Bo) is one of the most famous children's poets since the 1970s. He has published over twenty collections and many other works including some fairy tales. He has been awarded many important prizes and was put up for the Hans Christian Andersen



'Wu Diu Diu's adventure' by Jin Bo

Author Award by China in 1992. One of his poetic fairy tales, 'Wu Diu Diu's adventure' was granted the sixth Chinese Writers' Association's Children's Literature Award in 2004. This work consists of fifteen sonnets and tells of a naughty wooden foot Wu Diu Diu which lost his puppet body by accident and an old poet who accompanies him to look for the body. They experience many unexpected adventures and Wu Diu Diu becomes more and more kind and intelligent. At last it saves a lame girl, Zhen, from a house on fire and finally becomes a good foot for Zhen. This journey looking for life and love is a deeply emotional song for adults and children. Its special style and graceful artistic colour is remarkable. The jury gave it high praise for its beauty.

Chang Xin Gang has been well known for 'The lonely boat' and 'Youth's barrenness' since the 1980s. His 'Chen Tu's six threads of hair' was granted the sixth Chinese Writers' Association's Children's Literature Award in 2004. The jury complimented it thus:

As one of the leading authors of children's literature, Chang Xin Gang has been exploring some new and profound artistic pursuits in the field of children's fiction in recent years. With outstanding imagination and magical skill, he portrays a meaningful character named Chen Tu in his novel 'Chen Tu's six threads of hair'. This story created a distinctive kind of artistic style and showed the author's deeply philosophical thought about society and life. It might be called an ontological work of children's literature. With a kind of composed, leisurely narration and vivid, quick-witted descriptive language 'Chen Tu's six threads of hair' shows the author's strong and profound creative ability in fictional art field. It was one of the rare excellent children's fictions of recent years.

Qin Wenjun is an influential writer of children's and juvenile fiction, who has won more than twenty awards for children's literature. Her novels about the twins Jia Li and Jia Mei made her name in the 1990s. Her novels show a gentle sense of humour and perfect realistic skill.

Bing Bo (formerly Zhao Bing Bo) has been writing for children since the 1980s. His fairy tale 'Stupid Cat's biography', which consists of three stories about the stupid cat ('Stupid Cat and the outer-space pedlar' 'Stupid Cat and the Chinese qigong master' and 'Stupid Cat and the inventor') won the sixth Chinese Writers' Association's Children's Literature Award in 2004. This is an odd, fanciful, quick-witted and amusing series of complicated and dramatic stories with lively characters. The visionary stories and characters mirror real life and give young readers some philosophical illumination. The lovely humorous cartoon character Stupid Cat has become well known among Chinese children and young people since a 26-part cartoon series about him was shown on CCTV – Chinese Central TV. Lots of young people even name themselves 'Stupid Cat' on the internet. A new series of humorous and warmhearted fairy tales called 'Pumpkin Castle' has just been published. There are six titles, including 'Little Mermaid Fairy' and 'Little Shell Fairy'. These warm, humane and touching stories show a new direction in Bing Bo's writing and in Chinese children's literature generally.

Zheng Chun Hua's series of stories 'Big-head Son and Small-head Daddy' has been a very influential book for little children. The main characters of the series are a 4-year-old naughty boy and his childlike daddy. With a mother's feeling, the author describes those tiny, trivial but meaningful things in the course of a little child's growing up. She has created an atmosphere of ideal family life in her work: the parents are tolerant and understand their children perfectly; and the children can develop their nature and creativity freely. This book has been made into a cartoon series for CCTV with the same name, and this title has become an influential brand in children's book marketing.

Peng Xue Jun is an outstanding younger writer, who began her writing career in the 1990s. Her most representative novel is 'You are my sister', winner of the sixth Song Qing Ling Children's Literature Award. In this story, a young girl from the city goes to a remote village in the west of Hunan Province with her mother, where she becomes very friendly with a 15-year-old girl, Ar Tao. Ar Tao has to refuse the young man she loves in order to take care of her youngest sister, who is very ill; she has to see the young man married to another, but in spite of her sacrifice, the little girl dies anyway. The story ends with how Ar Tao emerges from her grief and begins to look forward to happiness again in her life. This novel describes the simple folk life of the Miao people,



*'Stupid Cat's biography'
'Little Mermaid Fairy'
and 'Little Shell Fairy'
all by Bing Bo*



The Little Stone Lion by Xiong Lei and Xiong Liang is issued under the author name of Kim Xiong in the US

a minority community who live in a mountainous region of China. The strange customs and the beautiful scenery described make this a novel that is like a calm, graceful folksong, coloured lightly with sadness.

***The Xiong brothers are
the brightest team in
Chinese children's
literature in recent years*** :

In the early years of this century, some young authors have been attracting public attention for their fresh and pure lyrical style and their concern for humanity. Among these are a pair of brothers, the writer Xiong Lei and the illustrator Xiong Liang who work collaboratively. They are the brightest team in Chinese children's literature in recent years. Their picturebook 'Little Mole's potato' was granted the sixth Chinese Writers' Association's Children's Literature Award in 2004. It tells how, in a treasure hunt among moles, a little mole found a small potato beside his den and liked it quite as much as if it really was treasure. Disregarding the other moles' mockery, he took care of the small potato day and night and protected it from the other animals. The potato became bigger and bigger, and one day it was picked out of the earth by the big hand of a man. The man was a farmer who had planted the potato. Little Mole felt broken-hearted, but eventually he came up smiling to begin hunting for new treasure. The Xiong brothers' new picturebook *The Little Stone Lion*, about a stone lion that is the angel of a small town and is much loved by the town's adults and children, was issued on both sides of the Taiwan Channel at the same time (2005). It won the Chinese Times 'Reading' Best Children's Book Award and is due to be published also in the United States, Japan and France. The main characteristic of the Xiong brothers' work is a poetic and elegant style. Especially Xiong Liang's illustrations have a distinctive artistic character, which ingeniously

mix the brushwork of Chinese painting with Western painting techniques, creating a bold frame for the quietly elegant Chinese ink colour. Xiong Liang is undoubtedly one of the most talented young illustrators of children's books. In 2004, he was commissioned by the Chinese Post Bureau to design and draw commemorative stamps for the bicentenary of Hans Christian Andersen's birth. The stamps were issued in Denmark at the same time.

Another notable new-comer is Wang Yi Mei. 'Moon River of Little Mole' was granted the sixth Chinese Writers' Association's Children's Literature Award in 2004. The hero is a little mole named Mica who is the youngest of a big warm family. He is thin and black, not like his brothers who have brown and bright fur. He abandoned himself to fantasy and didn't like to learn how to dig. Mica meets Nilly, the youngest daughter of Mr Ni Mole beside the beautiful Moon River. Mica and Nilly find each other congenial. Nilly has to wash many, many clothes every day and Mica would like to help his friend, so he decides to leave his home town and go out into the wide world to see if he can invent a washing machine for Nilly. He meets a poor enchanter called Guligu; a crow called Black Carbon; and Mr Hedgehog. He experiences various hardships and is even turned into a crow by magic on one occasion. Mica is always optimistic and treats all his friends honestly. Eventually, he grows up and manages to create a washing machine, and then he goes back to the Moon River and his dream comes true. This book has a distinctly lyrical flavour; the unhurried prose narrative is calm,

***Market-driven authors :
have scant regard for the
idea of literary creativity :
and individuality :***

soft, graceful and shows exquisite concern for humanity.

In 2003, Jiangsu Children's Publishing House brought out the 'I am good' series; the Tomorrow Publishing House published the Little Penguin 'Spirit of growing up' series; and the 'Hug me' series came out from the China Welfare Fund Publishing House. These are all well-designed books for 3–6-year-olds on the theme of growing up.

Commercial publishing for children

Earlier, two tendencies in children's literature were mentioned, and all the books described so far represent the first tendency. The second tendency in children's publishing in China today is much influenced by the marketing pattern of the Harry Potter books. Under this influence, more commercial, popular books are being published in China for children in recent years. For example, in 2002, three young women authors set themselves up as the 'Pretty Clothes Writing Team' to write for teenaged girls. This team impressed the public with their fashionable style, just like a pop group, and they wrote more than twenty novels for young people over two or three years, almost all about the emotions, friendship, relationships between teenagers at school. After a couple of years, other 'youth novels' with similar characters and scenarios began to spring up. This new pattern of author team had scant regard for the idea of literary creativity and individuality, and they set much more store by marketing. As time went by, the team came in for more and more criticism for their slapdash writing and lack of individuality, and eventually, Pretty Clothes came to an end in 2005.

Another very influential writing team consisted of two young authors who wrote a novel called 'I am mad about songs' (2002,

Children's books discussed in the text

BING Bo

- (2002) 'Stupid Cat's biography', Relay Publishing House
- (2006) 'Pumpkin Castle' series, Picture-Story Publishing House

CAO Wenxuan

- (1998) 'Thatched cottage', Jiangsu Juvenile & Children's Publishing House
- (1998) 'Red tiles', October Literature & Art Publishing House
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Shanghai People's Publishing House). It describes life in high school and the emotional turmoil of teenagers. The story had such a strong and distinct fashionable style that it became extremely popular with young people. It started out as a cartoon film, it was then published as a book, and later came a CD, a T-shirt, a computer game, textbooks, star cards, quick meals and so on, and currently it is being adapted for the stage

and television, but in spite of the commercial success of their work, the two young writers parted company in 2004.

The first book of Hong Ying Yang's series of children's stories *Puck Ma Xiao Tiao* [The naughty boy] was published by Relay Publishing House in 2003. The author and the publisher joined forces and this series was produced according to a meticulous marketing plan that they drew up together. The series consists of funny stories about a 10-year-old naughty boy and his friends, and it blends exaggerated reality, fantasy and buffoonery. The most obvious characteristic of the series is that it is entertaining for children. Up to 2004, sixteen titles (amounting to 2.25 million copies) had been published in this series and it is undoubtedly one of the bestsellers by a Chinese author in the Chinese children's book market in the first five years of the 21st century. It inspired other authors of children's literature, but there are divided views on the series.

As a result of chasing big sellers in the short term, more and more books for children have been published in China, but few of them have been outstanding. Children's literature has come more and more under the influence of the commercial process developing so rapidly in China, and this influence will certainly continue on all fronts.

Dai Xiao-qiao has just begun his schooldays with a gang of friends. These are typical mischievous boys, sometimes naughty, with nicknames like Petty Lin and Big Banana. They study and play together but naturally prefer playing. As soon as the bell rings to end class, they charge from the school, jumping like horses. Football, which they play in an innovative way, is their favourite game. As they play, they debate and argue.

*For some of the details and the style of illustrations, this book borrows considerably from the French children's book, *Le Petit Nicolas*, but new ingredients are added to the mix, reflecting the heavy social burdens Chinese children often have to bear, such as the pressure of winning entrance to a good high school and often exorbitant expectations of parents, as well as the shock brought by experiencing Western culture, the latter something their parents rarely encountered. A child wrote to the author of this popular series of three books to ask his age, convinced that the author was also a child. This confirms that in his creations, this writer skilfully expresses a child's perspective on the world.*

MENG Lingyuan (SHI Yu trans)



MEI Zi-han (SHEN Yuan-yuan illus)

Dai Xiao-qiao he Tade ge Men Er

[*Dai Xiao and his friends*]

Tianjin: New Buds Press 2005 147pp

ISBN 7530729489

(fiction, 6-12)

'Linked Pictures'

The Phenomenon of Lianhuanhua



• Lianhuanhua is a kind of comic book or rudimentary picturebook, initially published for an adult market but which quickly became immensely popular with children in China in the 20th century. Two Chinese American scholars trace the history, influence and decline of this unique Chinese form

The *lianhuanhua* (literally 'linked pictures') is a traditional Chinese popular form, predating the modern picturebook. A *lianhuanhua* book is usually tiny, typically about 9 x 15cm, with a coloured cover and on each page an identically line-framed black-and-white line drawing, with a 2cm area for text at the bottom. Deeply rooted in Chinese culture, *lianhuanhua* began to be published in the early 20th century as popular reading for adults, and in its heyday, it was one of the most popular forms of entertainment there has ever been in China.

This was before children's literature as we know it really existed in China, and children were immediately attracted to these little books, which covered all kinds of topics. Children quickly became the majority readership of *lianhuanhua*, and for almost a century, these books were the most popular reading material among children.

by WEIMIN MO and WENJU SHEN



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***For almost a century, these
books were the most
popular reading material
among children*** :

They have had more influence on Chinese children’s development as readers than any other kind of literature, apart from school textbooks.

Having emerged around the turn of the 20th century, *lianhuanhua* reached its peak as a form in the 1950s. In the 1980s, *lianhuanhua* began to be subsumed into the general picturebook market and today they are no longer published, except as collectibles; they now represent one of the ten most favoured categories of antiques in China (Xu 2001). There is even talk of building a museum of *lianhuanhua* (Xiao 2000).

Origins of lianhuanhua

According to Huang Yuanlin, some scholars trace the roots of *lianhuanhua* back as far as the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC to AD 9). They claim that the pictures discovered in the Mawangdui Mausoleum unearthed in Hunan Province are the origin of Chinese *lianhuanhua* because the pictures obviously work together to tell stories (Huang 1987); others believe that ‘The Complete Edition of the Tale of the Three Kingdoms’, which was published in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties (AD 1279–1644), is the official beginning of *lianhuanhua*, because all 69 pages of that book have an identical form of design with text printed below the illustration, just as modern *lianhuanhua* have (Xia 1987).

Towards the end of the Qing Dynasty (AD 1644–1911), ‘New Year posters’ (‘*nianhua*’) began to be purchased by farmers each year before the New Year celebration, to replace the previous year’s poster. These New Year posters often included illustrations, of identical size

and shape, showing historical or legendary characters or serving as an almanac (Ah 1987). Also, some novels published at that time included an illustration for each chapter. One way or another, it is clear that the Chinese have attempted from earliest times to use serial pictures to tell stories.

The first Western printed pictures disseminated in China were probably in biblical stories that missionaries brought to China in the 19th century. These pictures were reproduced and circulated, and the Chinese were fascinated by the new lithographic printing technology. Traditional Chinese artists were impressed by the accurate perspectives, realistic composition and scientific anatomy displayed in pictures from the West. They quickly learned new techniques from Western artists, and, especially after the Opium War of 1840–2, when the coastal areas became open to foreign trade, there was a movement in China to learn Western ideas and technology. In the early 20th century, the first Western art school, the Tushanwan Institute of Arts, was founded in Shanghai. About the same time, lithographic printing, which had recently been introduced into China, became popular and played an important role in the development of publishing in China.

***The Chinese were fascinated
by Western lithographic
printing technology in the
19th century*** :

The British were the first to run a newspaper business in Shanghai after the Opium War, quickly followed by the Chinese. Before photography was popularly used in news media, lithographically printed drawings were used.

In 1884 readers of the Chinese daily *Shen Bao* found that every ten days a copy of the lithographically printed eight-page *Dianshizhai*

pictorial came with their newspaper. It had a coloured cover and mainly carried picture serials with a short narrative or news story to go with them. The pictorial provided information that covered every important aspect of life: current events in East–West conflicts in culture, politics or war; new achievements in science and technology; exotic Western traditions and customs. There were also illustrated news reports about the corruption of the Chinese government, the hardships of the poor and local events. Culturally China was in a swirl of change. The Westernisation movement was strongly affecting traditional values, and new ideas were introduced into China every day. New industries were taking shape in large cities. Rapid urbanisation produced a great number of urban workers as well as an emerging middle class. Among the urban population, the percentage of literate people was still very low, but the new classes hungered for information.

A brand-new way of : making art in China :

The artists who were hired to make the illustrations in *Dianshizhai* pictorial were mostly trained in Chinese traditional painting, working with a pointed brush. As they made illustrations for the pictorial, they also absorbed many techniques from Western fine art. According to Yu Qiuyu (2001), their endeavours met with severe criticism in traditional art circles. In spite of this, their more sensuous style using a combination of Eastern and Western techniques was greatly appreciated by readers. Their illustrations, which represented a brand-new way of making art in China, were the major attraction of the pictorial. It ran for fourteen years altogether. Many other newspapers followed suit and began to publish separate copies of current affairs pictorials, thus heralding the birth of *lianhuanhua*.

Small publishers of opera scripts realised that lithographically printed picturebooks based on popular operas could be lucrative also for them, and they rushed to recruit artists and create small picturebooks, mostly in the same format – a quarter of the page at the top contained around 90 characters of text and the rest of the page below was the illustration. Thus the modern *lianhuanhua* was born.

At first most of them were opera stories with illustrations, such as *Limao Huan Taizhi* [Substituting the leopard cat for the prince] (Shanghai: Youwen 1920), but before long, topics were expanded to include sensational news stories and classics of Chinese literature. However, the illustrators hired to make books had very little professional training. Often they wrote the text too, and as a result, many books were crudely made and lacked quality. Basically the illustrators copied the stage scenes and presented in pictures no more than a skeleton of what the theatre audience saw.



Substituting the leopard cat for the prince

There were exceptions: the illustrator of the story *Jiangzhe Zhefeng Xui Zhan Huabao Daquan* [The complete pictorial story of the bloodbath between warlords in Zhejiang and Jiangsu] (Shanghai: Zhanshi Xiezenkuan, 1924) displays solid training in Western pen drawing

and a mastery of accurate perspective and techniques such as hatching and shading. Later, the size was further reduced to make the lianhuanhua more portable and affordable, and they stayed at the size of 9 x 15cm for more than half a century.

Growth of lianhuanhua

The emergence of lianhuanhua reflects the relationship between supply and demand: the ever-growing population of the urban working class was so hungry for information that even prestigious publishers like the World Publishing Company jumped on the bandwagon in 1927, publishing five abridged versions of the most popular Chinese classic novels in lianhuanhua form, to high standards. The binding and layout was much improved and the books were printed on quality paper with an exquisitely designed cover and jacket. The artwork was more appealing to readers than in previously published lianhuanhua, and with this series, the word ‘lianhuanhua’ became the official term for this type of picturebook: it was printed on the cover of all five sets of classics and was accepted by the public.

The increasing readership of lianhuanhua caught the attention of booksellers traditionally dealing in opera scripts, and, inspired by the prospect of the huge demand, they started a book rental business with lianhuanhua, much as chapbook vendors had done in Europe. It was a good idea. Urban workers could not afford tickets to the opera, but for a few cents they could enjoy reading these picturebooks for hours. All of a sudden, book rental booths sprang up all over large cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin. This booming business pushed the publishers to make more books and improve their quality. Many of them even developed their own distribution networks in south-east Asia. Publishers and book rental vendors became natural partners in promoting lianhuanhua, and both sectors grew rapidly in number. The well-known contemporary novelist Feng Jichai, who has a passion for lianhuanhua, recalls that his mother often used book rental booths as babysitters. Whenever she went shopping, she left Feng at a book rental booth and didn’t come back to pick him up till she had finished shopping (Feng 1998).



The bloodbath between warlords in Zhejiang and Jiangsu

• ***The urban working class***
 • ***was so hungry for***
 • ***information that even***
 • ***prestigious publishers***
 • ***jumped on the bandwagon***

By the time the Communists came to power in 1949, there were about 800 book rental booths in Shanghai, one at almost every street corner (Luo 2000). They became indispensable to the city landscape. All a book rental booth needed was a few simple movable bookshelves along the wall over a line of small benches. Some of them were sheltered under awnings or in a lean-to shack in a laneway; others were out in the open. Whatever the setup, most readers sitting there were children. You could rent books out and keep them for a few days if you were willing to pay a little more. As the renowned Chinese writer Mao Dun put it,

'[T]he streets of Shanghai are dotted with numerous book rental booths, very much like sentries... They are virtually the most popular mobile libraries... Moreover, they are the most powerful and widely used tools for the continuing education of the masses!' (Lin and Zhao 1987)



The old books of linked pictures

The title page of He Youzhi's 'The Old Books of Linked Pictures' (Shanghai: Shanghai Huabao Zhubanshe, 1999), shows the book rental booth on the left and the illustrators working on lianhuanhua at the printing shop on the right.

A total of 400 million copies of lianhuanhua were published in the first three quarters of 1980, making one-fifth of the books published in China at that period (Lin and Zhao 1987). By then, lianhuanhua covered multifarious topics: realistic stories, stories based on movies, plays, local operas, stories abridged from the classics (for example various versions of 'Havoc in the heavens', which is abridged from the

classic novel 'Pilgrim to the West'), historical stories (such as that of the war between the Chu and the Han in 206 BC), mysteries, fantasies, biographical stories about powerful or patriotic people (like Wu Zetian, China's only female emperor, or Zhan Tianyu, the outstanding railway engineer), mythic

***By 1949 there were about
800 book rental booths in
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every street corner*** :

stories (about Nu Wu, for example, the goddess who created and rescued humans), folktales, legends, epics. The best-known Kung Fu story is ‘The thirteenth sister’ (illustrated by Xu Hongda), but there are surprisingly few stories of this type. There are also versions of ‘Snow White’, the *Iliad*, the *Arabian Nights*, stories of the ancient Olympic games, a biography of Thomas Edison, and even abridged lianhuanhua versions of *Les Misérables* and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Generally speaking, the language of lianhuanhua is easily readable for children of about the age of eleven. It was common for a family to rent a stack of lianhuanhua and enjoy reading them together. When the playwright Shen Ji (1999) reminisces about his childhood, he mentions that for recreation in his family there were only two things to do: go to the theatre or go to the book rental booth to get lianhuanhua. It is reported that a farmer who won the 1997 Model of Home Literacy Award in



Left: Wu Zetian, illustrated by Dan Yuanji
Right: The war between the Chu and the Han, illustrated by Wang Kewei

Shanghai had in his house a collection of 4,500 books, half of which were lianhuanhua. He claims that he became interested in reading because of lianhuanhua and that he helped his wife to learn to read and write after they got married, by introducing her to lianhuanhua (Shen 1999). One enthusiastic lianhuanhua collector recalls proudly that in his elementary school years he was a great storyteller and got a reputation as the ‘Story King’; all the stories he told his friends were from lianhuanhua (Ong 1998).

Lianhuanhua were often the first teacher in children’s visual education. Many children were fascinated by the realistic depictions in lianhuanhua illustrations and tried to figure out how someone could do such a great job of representing reality in drawing. A large number of children taught themselves how to draw by copying lianhuanhua. They began to explore and experiment with book-making on their own. As a child, the novelist Feng Jichai, inspired by the lianhuanhua he read, decided to write his own book and make

• ***Lianhuanhua were often***
• ***the first teacher in***
• ***children’s visual education***

the illustrations himself. He even gave himself a pen-name and displayed his book on the shelf together with the books he bought from the bookstore.

From the very beginning educators embraced *lianhuanhua* wholeheartedly, hailing them as children's picturebooks born and bred on the soil of Chinese culture. They strongly supported the publication of *lianhuanhua* and made valuable comments. For instance, the outstanding modern Chinese thinker and writer Lu Xun points out how the images of children in picturebooks reflect a nation's attitude to children's education:

[T]he images of children we see in these books [lianhuanhua] are either capricious, somewhat hooligan-like rascals or humble, subservient, apathetic 'good children'. That is not only due to lack of professional competence on the part of illustrators, but also to children they copied from reality. When published, young children try to imitate the images in the books. Let's take a look at picture books published in other countries: the English illustrations are self-assured, the German forthright, the Russian lush, the French elegant, the Japanese witty. None of them shows any traces of lifelessness as displayed in ours. A nation's folkways are

reflected in its literature and artwork; they are also reflected in illustrations made for children though some people still want to belittle those books.
(Lin and Zhao 1987)

The song of eternal regret



Development of illustration in *lianhuanhua*

In the early days the illustrators of *lianhuanhua* had very little professional training; they were really just apprentices and were not held in high esteem by society. Not many professionally trained artists were initially willing to get into the business of making *lianhuanhua*. However, as the form developed, more and more well-established artists became interested in making *lianhuanhua*. Some of them just did one book; others stayed with *lianhuanhua* for life. Their involvement broadened the horizons of *lianhuanhua* and they brought with them wide artistic experience that vitalised the business.

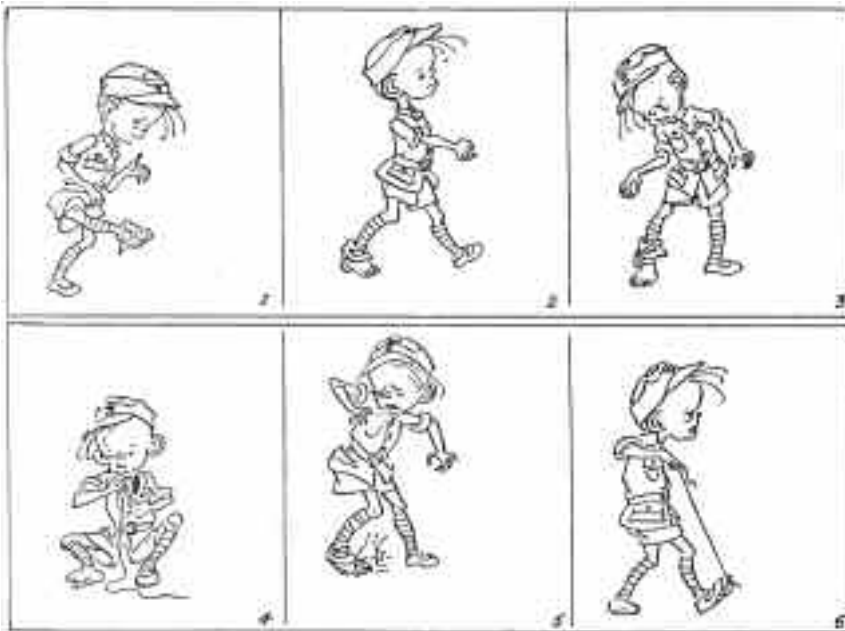
On the other hand, their innovative drive

could not always be contained by the traditional lianhuanhua format and style, and so, not surprisingly, they broke or bent many lianhuanhua traditions by selecting the art elements they believed to be most appropriate to the book being illustrated. They used different styles and media: cartoon, watercolour, woodcut, papercut, photo, folk art. Their involvement with making lianhuanhua forced the form to diversify and moved it towards eventually merging with children’s picturebooks.

As early as 1929, the famous painter and art educator Li Yishi (1886–1942) made his oversize lianhuanhua ‘The Song of Eternal Regret’, which is based on a poem by Bai Juyi, a popular Tang Dynasty poet. He evidently absorbed many Western art techniques in drawing and composition.

‘Sanmao the Soldier’ and ‘Sanmao the Vagrant’ are wordless lianhuanhua, not in the traditional lianhuanhua size, about a poor orphan named Sanmao, by the famous cartoonist Zhang Leping (1910–92). They first appeared in the newspaper as comic strips in the 1930s and 1940s. The first story is about Sanmao’s humorous but tough experiences as a child soldier during World War II. The other is about his sufferings on the streets of Shanghai. When they were published as picturebooks, they instantly became a favourite with children. Chinese children have been reading these two books for more than half a century. His innocent personality appeals to children so much that Sanmao has become a household figure in China like Mickey Mouse.

• *Chinese children have been*
 • *reading the Sanmao books*
 • *for more than half a century*



Sanmao the soldier



Left: *The thirteenth sister*



Right: *The story of restoration*, illustrated by Wang Xunqiu

Violence in lianhuanhua

Generally speaking, after 1950, there is no profanity or descriptions of sex in lianhuanhua, but they are sometimes violent. Some episodes in the two Sanmao books, for example, may be considered a little too brutal by Western standards. Violence is not traditionally considered as serious a taboo as sex in Chinese culture, however, especially the violence in Kung Fu stories, which has a supernatural touch. Lianhuanhua is, of course, a product of popular culture, and many of the books were made for adults. Moreover, for a large part of the 20th century, China was in turmoil and the society was extremely unstable. People were constantly threatened by all kinds of wars or violence. There was no way for parents to shield children from violent events, and Sanmao's resilient innocence not only brings tearful

***It cannot be denied that
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laughs to readers, which may be the best way to cope with trauma from violence, but also nurtures appropriate emotional and moral responses to brutality.

It cannot be denied that a sizable percentage of lianhuanhua were used for political or ideological propaganda. Especially in the years of class struggle, war stories or other types of bloody violence were common in lianhuanhua, for instance in 'The story of restoration'.

Decline of lianhuanhua

As the publication of lianhuanhua increased every year from the 1950s onwards, other types of picturebooks were also booming. Picturebooks as a genre in the literary sense started to take shape in the early 1950s and developed rapidly in the early 1960s, and their design and construction developed more professionally than did lianhuanhua. Stories for picturebooks began to be written by professional children's writers, and the

language used in picturebooks began to take children’s developmental stages into account. The illustrations were done by artists well versed in different media and styles, many of them graduates in art. Mainstream picturebooks never used the tiny size that is characteristic of lianhuanhua, but appeared in a variety of sizes and shapes. Gradually these picturebooks became more appealing to children than the traditional lianhuanhua with its rigid format and, in the end, the mainstream picturebook elbowed lianhuanhua out of the market.

In the early 1980s, the readership for lianhuanhua began to decline. Their market share was shrinking rapidly and towards the end of the 1980s new lianhuanhua were rarely produced. In the early 1990s lianhuanhua publishers were appalled to realise that they could not continue to produce lianhuanhua. The situation has been changing at an unbelievably fast speed in China since the early 1980s. As new technology and an influx of foreign publications allowed people access to far more information and the overall educational level of the population became much higher than it had been a century previously, the traditional lianhuanhua, with its one-size-fits-all verbal and visual narratives, was no longer able to meet the needs of today’s children for cognitive and aesthetic development.

An exception has been Wang Beikun’s ‘The pictorial biography of Little Smarty’ (Tianjin,



The pictorial biography of Little Smarty

China: Hebei Meishu Chubanshe, 1982), hailed as a rare success in the world of lianhuanhua, but in fact it is not really a traditional lianhuanhua but a children’s picturebook. Its success only signifies the direction of lianhuanhua’s evolution, that is, the way in which it has merged into the children’s picturebook genre. As a matter of fact, China’s picturebooks are now on the threshold of a golden age.

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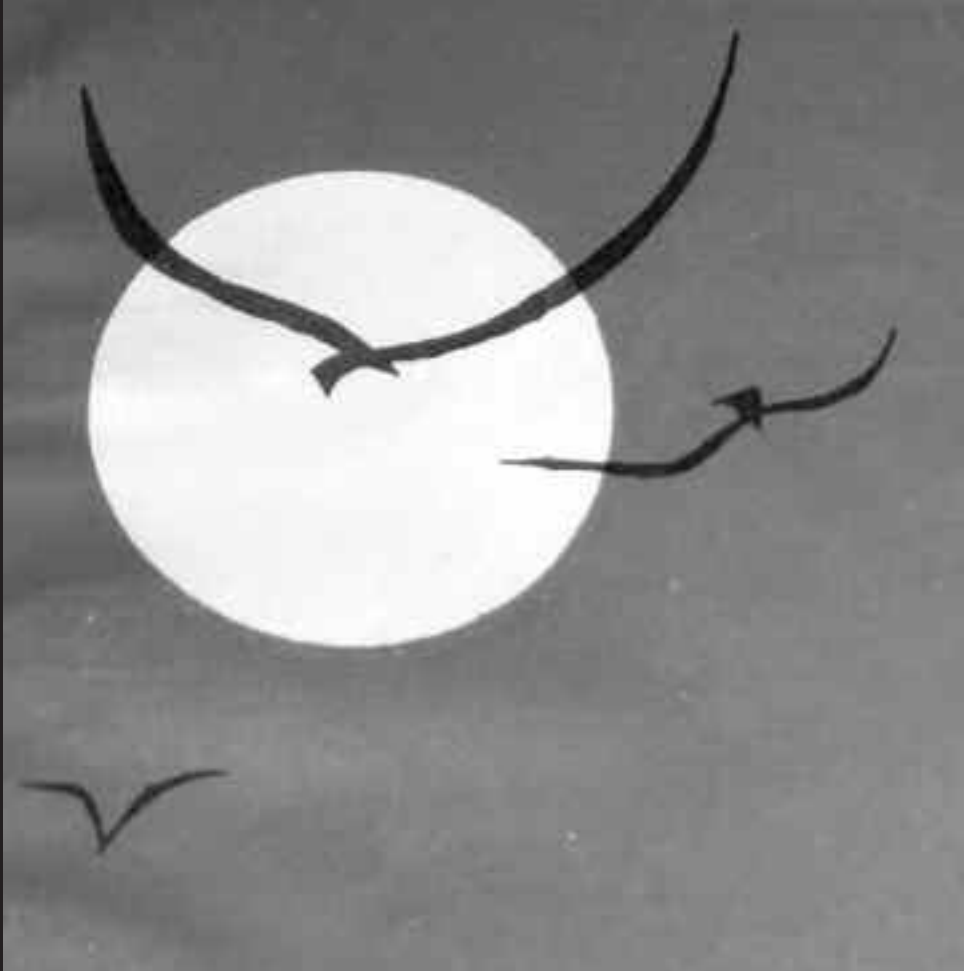
Children's Science Fiction in China

by WU YAN and KERRY MALLAN



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... This paper offers an overview of Chinese children's science fiction, by considering the influences which have shaped its development and the distinctive Chineseness of the genre; the paper also speculates about the future development of Chinese science fiction, as the processes of globalisation continue unabated

When Deng Xiaoping initiated his post-Cultural Revolution reforms in the 1980s, they were intended primarily to take China into a 'new era' characterised by a higher interaction, both economically and culturally, between East and West. This period of change and cultural activities, known as 'Cultural Fever', intensified the century-long debate over Chinese modernity. As ideas, people and popular culture migrated across national borders, this process of 'transnationalisation' of Chinese culture (Nonini and Ong 1997) enabled 'a proliferation of different ways of being Chinese'. Nonini and Ong argue that these multiple ways of being

Chinese (or multiple forms of 'Chineseness') reflect China's propensity to seek opportunities that go across geopolitical divides. While these opportunities may well be concerned with the rapidly growing Chinese economy, there is a resistance in China to globalisation of Chinese culture. According to Wang (2004), this resistance stems from 'the high respect shown to Confucius, the symbol of its tradition, who was severely castigated during the May 4th period and later in the Cultural Revolution'. This tension between Eastern traditions and Western influences has marked literature studies, particularly in the area of Chinese science fiction. However, research is seldom focused on Chinese literature in translation or how it is received by Western sinologists and general readers.

Beginnings of Chinese science fiction

Yang Xiao, editor of China's popular magazine *Ke Huan Shi Jie* [Science fiction world], claims that millions of Chinese young people are keen science fiction readers (Brave New World 2002). Lavie Tidhar (2004) says that science fiction in China has the 'largest single market in the world, having been part encouraged by the government and part-suppressed'. As Tidhar notes, the genre has had 'a convoluted history'. This history begins with the debate over the first 'true' science fiction novel.

There are two schools of thought about what was the first SF written for child readers in China. Some people (see Rao 1982) regard the novel *Meng You Tai Yang Xi* [A visit to the solar system in a dream], written by Zhang Ran in 1950, as the first. In this novel, a Chinese boy named Jing Er is transformed into the Monkey King¹ in a dream and becomes involved in a solar system odyssey where he experiences the sensation of vacancy (blankness) and light gravity among other phenomena. While this novel involves SF

There are two schools of thought about what was the first SF written for child readers in China

conventions and themes such as planet travelling, aliens and extra-terrestrials, the story relies on the familiar narrative strategy of a dream. This reliance on the dream motif, common to stories from ancient China, supports the view that it does not qualify as true SF.

Another camp (see Wu 2003) regards the short story 'Di Er Ge Yu Liang' [The second moon] written by Zheng Wenguang in 1954 as the first Chinese SF. This story tells of a child named Xiaoping who visits a space station and several working sites such as a space vegetable farm. Like Jing Er, Xiaoping also experiences a sense of low gravity and floating in space. However, this story is regarded by many as significant in terms of the beginning of the genre in the new China because it employs characteristics that are common to the (Western) SF literary tradition, particularly in its narrative vision of the future and the invention of space technologies.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Chinese SF writers' interest in science and technology reflected the modern world's obsession with innovation and progress – characteristics attributed to industrialisation. Consequently, stories focused on aliens, time travel, robotics and adventure. However, from 1966 to 1976 (the period of the Cultural Revolution) all literature and art were denounced as bourgeois. As Han (cited in Tidhar 2004) claims, SF was 'boosted for a period of time by the Chinese Communist Party in the 1950s [when] China was ready to achieve a socialist industrialization' but it 'came to a halt' during the Cultural Revolution. The only SF story published in 'Junior Science' magazine at that time was 'Shi You Dan Bai'



Little Lingtong's odyssey to Future (Ye)

[Petroleum protein] written by Ye Yonglie in 1976. When Mao died, just months later, and the Gang of Four was defeated, there was a new lease of life for SF in China. Ye Yonglie became the most popular SF writer, with his novel *Xiao Ling Tong Man You Wei Lai* [Little Lingtong's odyssey to Future] (1978), which won many awards and sold 1.6 million copies in its first print run alone. After Mao's death nearly all the early SF writers of the 1950s and 60s returned to writing and were joined by a burgeoning number of emerging new writers in the field. While the literary doctrine of the Cultural Revolution continued to impact on Chinese literature from 1976 to 1978, after the Mao era, Western concepts and values began to transform literature and to introduce other forms of popular culture to China.

Prior to 1978, China had regarded SF solely as a genre of children's literature. However, after the collapse of the Gang of Four, many SF writers changed direction and aimed their writing at adult readers. Thus, SF in China began to have a parallel development in both chil-

After the Cultural Revolution, many SF writers changed direction and aimed their writing at adult readers

dren's literature and adult literature. The Western works which flooded China undoubtedly influenced the kinds of stories that were written, yet they nevertheless retained a distinctive 'Chineseness'.

From the 1980s to the present, changes in the West brought on by a shift from a post-industrial society under late capitalism to a globally interconnected world characterised by info-tech, media and service industries have found their way into China, as Han Song notes:

The old concepts are being challenged as the country finds it can no longer be excluded out of the [global] village. The science and technology revolution is turning China from a traditional society into a more open and future-oriented society. [...] SF thus inevitably became commonplace in urban areas where youngsters grow up watching television, playing electronic games and surfing on the Internet. (cited in Tidhar 2004)

Magic wings (Zheng)



In the past 20 years, the active writers in children's SF include Xing He; Yang Peng; Wu Yan; Zheng Wenguang and Wu Yan; Li Zhiwei; and Liu Cixin (see panel on p. 44 for titles).

Characteristics of Chinese children's SF

Chinese children's SF offers images of a pure and clear world for young readers, whereby good triumphs over evil, yet it exceeds the natural and pure worlds common to Chinese fairy tales by taking on modern



Left to right: Tiger's track in thick woods (Xiao)
On the sixth day: life or death? (Wu)
Adventure in the deep soul (Zheng and Wu)
Computer Empire (Yang)

concerns such as feminism (for example in Zheng Wenguang's *Shen Yi* [Magic wings]), as well as more philosophical concerns such as the universe and the association between magic and science. 'Little Ling-tong's odyssey to Future' by Ye Yonglie is another good example of a SF story that combines political viewpoints with familiar SF technologies.

In this novel, the protagonist, a young reporter, goes to a city called 'Future' in which there is no class struggle, cars float in the air, rice is as pearls, robots carry out all kinds of household chores. This is a most influential work and has impressed at least two generations of readers. This successful combination of science, the future and technology in a SF tale has a long tradition in China, stemming from the late 19th century. While the stories may vary according to the sophistication of the scientific imaginings, they appear to retain their familiar twin purpose: to entertain and to educate.

• ***The combination of science,
the future and technology
in a SF tale has a long
tradition in China***

Another key characteristic of Chinese children's SF is the frequent mention of Chinese morality and virtues, such as assiduousness, helpfulness, seeking justice and patriotism. The intentional inclusion of these qualities by writers is to cultivate in children a sense of good citizenship and exemplary behaviour. For many writers, Chinese ethics and morality play an important role not only for the present, but also for developing good adults of the future (for example in Tong Enzheng's novella *Zhui Zong Kong Long de Ren* [The man who searched for a dragon]). In SF stories by Wang Guozhong and Liu Cixin concepts of justice and righteousness are promoted, and patriotic sentiment pervades Liu's *Zhong Guo Tai Yang* [A Chinese sun].

• ***For many writers, Chinese
ethics and morality play
an important role***

Fostering a love of science and an interest in the future in children is the third characteristic of Chinese SF. SF has always been regarded as a kind of popular science or science communication both in China and in

the former Soviet Union. Therefore, most writers aim to spread scientific knowledge and involve children in scientific activities through their SF stories. This motivation is evident in the works of Chi Shuchang, where scientific subjects like biotechnology, physics and psychology feature. Xiao Jianheng is another genius in constructing stories with a strong science presence. It would be fair to say that many young readers of these stories cannot help but become captivated by the fabulous world of science and technology that is represented in these novels.

Selected Children's Science Fiction Titles

- CHI S (1956) *Ge Diao Bi Zi de Da Xiang* [Elephant which has no long nose] Beijing: China Junior and Children Publishing House
- LI Z (2000) *Ke Long Feng Bao* [Clone storming] Shenzhen: Haitian Publishing House
- LIU C (2002) 'Tian Shi Shi Dai' [The time belongs to angels] *Science Fiction World* 6
- LIU C (2002) 'Zhong Guo Tai Yang' [A Chinese sun] *Science Fiction World* 1
- LIU X (1961) 'Di Xia Shui Dian Zhan' [Hydro-power station under earth] *Junior Literature* 7-8
- RAO Z (1997) *Fei Die Lai Ke* [Guest from fling squire] Beijing: Ocean Publishing House
- TONG E (1978) 'Shan Hu Dao Shang de Si Guang' [Death ray on a coral Island] *People's Literature* 7
- TONG E (1979) *Xue Shan Muo Di* [Magic flute in snow mountain] Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House
- TONG E (1981) *Zhui Zong Kong Long de Ren* [The man who searched for a dragon] Chengdu: Sichuan Junior and Children's Publishing House
- WANG C (1981) *Bai Se Wang Guo de Mi Mi* [Secret of the white kingdom] Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House
- WANG G (1963) *Hei Long Hao Shi Zong* [The disappearance of the black dragon] Shanghai: Junior and Children's Publishing House
- WANG Y (1977) 'Qiang Ba de Yan Jing' [Qiang Ba's eyes] *Red Little Army News*
- WUY (1996) *Sheng Si Di Liu Tian* [On the sixth day - life or death?] Nanjing: Jiangsu Junior and Children's Publishing House
- XIAO J (1965) *Qi Yi de Ji Qi Gou* [A different robotic dog] Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House.
- XIAO J (1979) *Mi Lin Hu Zong* [Tiger's track in thick woods] Shanghai: Junior and Children's Publishing House
- XING H (1996) *Yue Hai Ji Di* [Moonsea base] Hefei: Anhui Junior and Children's Publishing House
- YANG P (1999) *Dian Nao Di Guo* [Computer empire] Shijiazhuang: Hua Shan Wen Yi Publishing House
- YEY (1976) 'Shi You Dan Bai' [Petroleum protein] *Junior Science* 1
- YEY (1978) *Xiao Ling Tong Man You Wei Lai* [Little Lingtong's odyssey to Future] Shanghai: Junior and Children's Publishing House
- YEY (1979) *Diu Le Bi Zi Yi Hou* [After lost one's nose] Shanghai: Junior and Children's Publishing House
- YU Z (1956) *Dao Ren Zhao Yue Liang Shang Qu* [Going to the man-made moon] Beijing: China Junior and Children Publishing House
- ZHANG R (1950) *Meng You Tai Yang Xi* [A visit to the solar system in a dream] Tianjin: Knowledge Bookstore
- ZHENG W (1954) *Di Er Ge Yu Liang* [The second moon] in *China Junior News* Sept. 23, 25, 27 and 30
- ZHENG W (1955) *Tai Yang Tan Xian Ji* [Exploring the sun] Shanghai: Junior and Children's Publishing House
- ZHENG W (1982) *Shen Yi* [Magic wings] Changsha: Hunan Junior and Children's Publishing House
- ZHENG W and WUY (1996) *Xin Ling Tan Xian* [Adventure in the deep soul] Beijing: Junior and Children's Publishing House

Problems and future perspectives

Notwithstanding the high interest in SF by Chinese children and youth, there is a shortage of high-quality works by talented writers. When the division between SF for adult readers and SF for child readers came into existence, many good genre writers turned away from writing for children and focused on writing for the adult market. As fewer writers are likely to engage in children's SF writing, the quality of contemporary children's genre works is not high.

***There is a shortage of
high-quality works by
talented writers*** :

The second problem is that few academic studies focus on children's SF in its own right. Normally, most Chinese children's literature textbooks contain one chapter devoted to the so-called 'science literature'. The role of science literature is to 'describe', 'present' and 'popularise' science by using literary and artistic methods in the form of SF, science fairy tales, science poems/verse and science humour (Ye 1998).

Despite this marginalisation of SF, there have been a number of important papers from academics in the field. In 1985 Wu Yan made a presentation to the Conference on Children's Science Literature held by the Chinese Science Writers' Union, which argued that the genre functions more on a psychological level for children than on a science communication level. Wu also considered how children's SF could be applied to enhance intuitive thinking, to encourage the imagination, to extend problem-solving abilities and social adaptation, as well as stimulating children's motivation in exploring the world (Wu 1985). Wu (1999) later pointed out some characteristics of Chinese

children's and young adult SF during the period from 1950 to 1980, including the 'longing for good life, good future and a world in prosperity of science'.

In *Er Tong Wen Xue Ming Zhu Dao Du* [Reading guide to famous children's literature] edited by Wang Quangen (2002), Wu discusses Darko Suvin's (1972) notion of 'cognitive estrangement' – a necessary and sufficient condition of the genre whereby readers must step back from the known world in order to take seriously the world of the text. This was the first time that the work of Suvin, an acclaimed SF critic, was introduced into mainland China. It was also an important step in bringing to the field of children's literature a key concept that had been introduced to the SF field about a decade earlier.

In his theoretical book on the narratology of cartoons, Yang Peng (2003) discusses the importance of SF in cartoons, and provides a summary of several main themes of cartoon SF: past time-space; present time-space; future time-space; parallel worlds; virtual reality; utopia and dystopia; and mixed time-space. He also considers several narrative methods in SF cartoon stories. In the same year, Ge Hongbing and Wang Quangen debated the topic of whether Chinese SF is a genre of children's literature or a literature for adult readers in the newspaper *China Reading Weekly* (see Ge 2003; Wang 2003). The key point of difference between these two well-known and prominent professors was the connection between children's literature and SF, with Ge arguing that SF could

***There has been some
debate on whether Chinese
SF is a genre of children's
literature or a literature
for adult readers*** :

not move forward while it remained tied to the field of children's literature and Wang strongly advocating the close connection between the two.

Concluding comment

As this brief overview has shown, Chinese SF has continued to thrive amidst a history of political and ideological change. Undoubtedly, the impact of globalisation has been felt in China and with it comes a challenge to traditional concepts. In urban areas of China, the impact is obviously greater than in the rural areas. Alongside the entertainment

It remains to be seen how the globalisation of fiction will impact on the creative output of the Chinese SF writing community

factor that accompanies new global technologies and youth cultures, the Chinese government has attached a greater importance to the education of young people in science and technology. As the processes of globalisation continue, new economic and cultural zones will continue to be created within and across nations, but it remains to be seen

how the globalisation of fiction will impact on the creative output of the Chinese SF writing community in the years ahead. Hopefully, the works will retain their particular 'Chineseness' while at the same time offering a universal readership some insights into the Chinese imagination and literary inventiveness.

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- YANG P (2003) *Ka Tong Xu Shi Xue* [Narratology of cartoons] Wuhan: Hubei Junior and Children's Publishing House
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1 Monkey King is a famous character that comes from an ancient Chinese fantasy novel *Xi You Ji* [Monkey's journey to the west], written in the Ming Dynasty by Wu Chenen. In this novel, Sun Wukong, the monkey, has strong magic abilities and could transform himself into 72 different shapes including animal, plant and stones. He could use human language. The novel tells about his journey to the Western world with his master, a Buddhist whose aim is to bring back the bible of Buddhism to China.

This remarkable portrait of life during the Cultural Revolution in China was awarded the prestigious Bologna Ragazzi Award for Nonfiction distinguished in creativity, educational value and artistic design in 2005. Each criterion is fully met in a book where an absorbing account of dramatic events combines with creative digital illustrations and photographs to make a striking, large-format presentation. A 13-year-old schoolboy in Beijing when Mao's Cultural Revolution began, Ange was fully inducted into the revolution, memorising Mao's quotations and pasting revolutionary posters in the streets while yearning to join the Red Guard along with many of his classmates.

When his fame makes him a target of Mao's regime, Ange's writer father suffers public humiliation and imprisonment. Ange begins questioning what is happening in his country even as he is forced to join millions of other young urban Chinese for 're-education' in the country as a peasant. While this life was physically challenging, Ange found the energy to develop his talent for painting and drawing. His dramatic, often painful personal narrative is complemented by a section that explains the historical period. Zhang now lives and works in Toronto.

Glenna Sloan



Ange ZHANG

Red Land, Yellow River: A Story from the Cultural Revolution

Toronto: Groundwood 2004 56pp ISBN 0888994893

(autobiography, 9+)

Gendered Imaginaries of Childhood

in Qin Wenjun's Jia Li and Jia Mei Stories

by ZHANG JIAHUA

(translated by CHEN Zhongmei,
ZHAO Xia and ZHANG Jiahua)



ZHANG Jiahua researches children's literature in Zhejiang Normal University and has been researching culture and language in children's literature for many years. He is also the author of fairy tales, novels, poetry, prose and biography for children

... Based on cultural studies, this essay analyses
... the popular Jia Li and Jia Mei series as
... gendered discourses, and puts these stories in
... the context of Chinese thinking about how
... children's literature shapes and moulds chil-
... dren's sense of themselves as gendered beings

Gendered discourse characterises many Chinese children's fictions, among which Qin Wenjun's series of stories about a young boy, Jia Li, and his twin sister, Jia Mei, is one of the most typical examples. These stories have been enjoyed by innumerable young readers in China and were adapted for film and TV. This success encouraged the writer to continue the stories, making it almost a never-ending series. By 2005 it had won several important awards in China, with its sales volume exceeding one billion. Because of its influence in China, it might not be an exaggeration to call this series a new classic of Chinese children's literature.

The popularity of this series can be ascribed to three main factors. First, it is very realistic, closely reflecting the experience of growing up of contemporary Chinese boys and girls, treating such themes as self-identity, the generation gap, family ethics and peer-group relationships. Second, the series is humorous and uses a colloquial style and the characters are lively and individualised and conscious of their gender roles, which attracts young readers. Third, each story has a specific theme. For example, should boys do housework as well as girls? Or how are peer-group relationships being developed? Moreover, all the short stories are unified into an organic body, and you can enjoy each episode without losing sight of the novel as a whole.

The stories first appeared as a serial in the *Ju Ren* [The giant] magazine, and were soon published as books: *Nansheng Jia Li* and *Nüsheng Jia Mei*, followed some years later by two more books. Later, all the stories were collected into two volumes, one about the boy and one about the girl. *Nansheng Jia Li* was also published in Japanese, in Dutch and in English (but in a limited edition, published in China, which means it is hardly available to Western readers).

Biological essentialism v social constructionism

There are two conflicting notions about gender identity: biological essentialism takes the existence of an individual's gender as a product of nature, while social constructionism claims that one's gender role is formed by nurture. Nowadays, childhood studies in the West is

inclined to propose that genders are culturally constructed, for the important reason that ‘we can have no prior access to understanding the sexed body outside of language and culture’ (Thew 2000). According to Zhang (1999), gendering implies ‘the process through which the individual acquires his/her sexual role behaviour and belief’. Individuals come to own their sexual roles by differentiating the self from the other.

Moreover, boys and girls as represented in children’s literature are a product of culture. John Stephens (1992) points out that in children’s fiction, ideology has always been inscribed into the discourse, implicitly or explicitly, and it is an important task for researchers to trace those signs of ideology. In his preface to *Ways of Being Male* (2002), Stephens further notes:

All textual representations engage in gendering their participants, of course, and it has been an important endeavor in criticism of children’s literature to map how the characteristic humanistic narratives of that literature are apt to be endemically gendered: ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are gendered terms, and signify social, that is, behavioural and experiential, difference.

This paper takes the social constructionist view, and traces the influence of nurture in gender shaping in *Nansheng Jia Li* and *Nüsheng Jia Mei*. It is important also to keep in mind that the children represented in Qin’s series are Chinese (in fact Shanghai children of the 1990s), and they differ from children brought up in Western cultures.

The gender identification of Jia Li and Jia Mei

Jia Li was born only minutes before Jia Mei, but in growing up, they experience quite different gender identification. Jia Li thinks girls narrow-minded and inclined to be extreme and that ‘their friendship can evaporate just because of some careless words’; but boys he considers lively, generous and ‘nine out of ten boys like to accomplish something’. Jia Li has rigid views about gender. He sees boys as grand and heroic but girls as weak and lacking in ambition: ‘Nine out of ten teenage guys want to become heroes’, ‘There are different types of girls in the world. Some of them are proud of their appearance...

There is another type of girl who likes to express her opinion through tears ...’ As a boy, Jia Li looks down on girls. This attitude is especially embodied when he lectures Jia Mei, for example: ‘Many girls

***• Social constructionism
• claims that one’s gender
• role is formed by nurture***



Nüsheng Jia Mei [*The girl Jia Mei*]

***• Jia Li sees boys as grand
• and heroic but girls as weak
• and lacking in ambition***

He seems to think that the interaction of male and female is a mutually mysterious process :

just muddle along for themselves, so few of them can become country leaders.’ ‘Girls are just shortsighted!’

However, Jia Li frequently amends his attitude when he comes across some girl who behaves differently, such as his classmate Du Xiaodu, who can climb windows like a boy, and who won a city-wide junior

high school English speaking competition, but without showing any sign of conceit. He praises her as ‘a confident and poised girl who conceals her brilliance’, ‘a tough girl’ and ‘a heroine’; he ‘wished they could form some type of alliance’.

Jia Li seems to think that the interaction of male and female is a mutually mysterious process. He thinks psychologists need to produce a dictionary of peculiar girls so that ‘boys can often turn it over and decode girls’ secrets’. He also thinks boys have far more troubles than girls, so he proposed to write an encyclopaedia of boys’ troubles, which will take at least three hundred thousand words. But he hesitates to start, because his good friend Lu Zhisheng warns him not to betray boys or let girls know boys’ secrets. The idea that boys can know girls’ secrets without any of their secrets being leaked to girls reveals the boys’ ideological arrogance

By comparison, Jia Mei’s gender identification process is much richer, though also full of frustrations. Jia Mei says more than once that at a young age she yearned to become a boy like Jia Li. Only as she grew up did she slowly realise her own identity: ‘Since I am destined to be a girl, I want to be the best. I don’t want to be a hoyden or a betrayer against girls.’ When at primary school, Jia Mei refused to make up like girls, but when she enters junior high school, she wants to be the most beautiful girl. At one time, Jia Mei’s good friend Lin Xiaomei makes her a ‘cloudy moon’ hair style (a fashionable hair style where the hair covers half of the face), which excites Jia Mei very much. The hair style triggers a great controversy in the class. Her brother Jia Li is much against it. Many of her classmates don’t like it either. From this example, we can see that what girls want is to be always confined in the social context and few can go as they please.

Since ancient times, the Chinese family has been known for its strict ethic of order under which the younger must obey the elder, and especially listen to what the father and elder brother say. Although we now live in more democratic times, males are still the dominant speakers in families. So as a girl, a daughter and a younger sister, Jia Mei endures a triple pressure. Jia Li often insists, ‘I’m the older brother. You always have to remember this



Nansheng Jia Li [The boy Jia Li]

Since ancient times, the Chinese family has been known for its strict ethic of order :

courtesy.' He never misses a chance to show his superiority to his twin sister. But Jia Mei is an independent girl. Though belittled by Jia Li, she never forgets to strive for her female voice.

***Jia Mei's words show an
awakening feminist
consciousness*** :

When it comes to distributing housework, while Jia Li runs around, Jia Mei takes her responsibility seriously, but also protests to her father, 'When can I be the general director to give orders to Jia Li? Your daughter is not a baby. She needs you to value her.' Jia Mei's words show an awakening feminist consciousness.

Manipulating masculinity and femininity

Masculinity, which represents strength, boldness and resolution, is often considered to be owned by the male, and bound up with the responsibility of going out to work to support the family. Femininity, on the other hand, connotes weakness, tenderness and patience, is often attributed to the female, and conjures up associations of housework and childcare. In Qin's series, these two qualities are clearly described.

In Jia Li's view, masculinity is essential for him to be a man. He insists on dealing with things in a 'manly' way. Even when selecting gifts for friends, he considers whether the gift might reflect badly on his manliness. By comparison, though Jia Mei identifies herself with femininity and wants to be beautiful, she is not so biased in favour of femininity as Jia Li is bound to masculinity. On one occasion, a new PE teacher, mistaking Jia Mei for another student, a boy who is good at sports, asks her to be his assistant and help her classmates with their exercises. Honour bound, Jia Mei strove as hard as she could, performed superbly at the basketball

game and won the match for the class. In this event, she went so 'wild' that she astonished her classmates. The moral is that graceful girls like Jia Mei can go 'wild' if only they want to. That is to say, 'wildness' is not a prerogative of men but can be fostered in the female. In other words, gender inclination can be chosen and variable: one's gender characteristics can be shaped by environmental effect (and let's not forget that Jia Mei had wanted to be a boy when she was younger).

Traditionally, many people have considered masculinity as the nature of the male and femininity as the nature of the female, and believe males and females should each be confined to their own role. Such an over-simplified dualism has been subject to feminist criticism. Mary Ellmann (1968) criticised the conventional view that distributes strength and pregnancy respectively to men and women, and Toril Moi (2002) reinforced her point by saying that social and cultural changes make female maternity and male strength unnecessary, so our society no longer needs a gender stereotype according to which male means strong and active, while female means weak and passive. Although feminist criticism takes several forms, most feminist critics are still antagonistic to dualism about gender. Geneviève Fraisse (2003) doubts if women should be represented only as either the same as or different from men, or whether one has to make a choice between these two alternatives. Julia Kristeva insisted on abolishing the distinction between the sexes, protested against pinning the label of femininity on women, and disagreed with the idea of so-called 'women's writing' and 'female discourse'. Kristeva is not anti-feminist, but is against the essentialisation of the 'female' in language. It may not be necessary for us to wipe out the borderline between male and female altogether, as Kristeva does, but we do need to see that there can be a combination of

'masculinity' and 'femininity' in a person, male or female. In Qin Wenjun's novels, Jia Mei is a typical example of this balance.

***There can be a combination
of 'masculinity' and
'femininity' in a person*** :

However, the 'male/masculinity–female/femininity' binary has been planted deeply into people's minds, especially in Chinese society. In one of Qin's stories, Grandma Wu, a neighbour of the Jias', has many views like these: 'Boys are to accomplish big things. As for girls, they should learn how to run a home' and 'Girls who fit the criterion must not be lazy, coquettish or stupid.' Her words fit in with Jia Li's views, and he gains her sympathy by being reckless. He asks her to persuade his father to excuse him from housework. As a result, the father grants Jia Li the commanding power to assign the housework, because he wants Jia Li to become a 'man'. But are boys really born to be incapable of housework? Why didn't their father consider granting this power to Jia Mei? All the family problems that come after this can be ascribed to the problematic gender ideas of Grandma Wu and the father. From these examples, we can see how 'masculinity' is manipulated and combined with male hegemony and becomes an instrument to oppress the female.

Chinese children's literature and gender

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese criticism of children's literature has been essentialist, and even the influence of Piaget's constructionism has been unable to shake this attitude. Sun Jianjiang (1995), for example, a famous writer, editor and commentator on children's literature, noted that Qin Wenjun and other female writers of contemporary children's

literature all reveal the pre-adolescent *yuan sheng tai* (which might be translated as 'prototype') of boys' and girls' lives. The term *yuan sheng tai*, which suggests an originally natural form of childhood, is often used in Chinese children's literature theory, which is given to an essentialist point of view.

After the Cultural Revolution, and right up into the 1980s and 90s, there was a boom in masculine works for children in China. Sun praised this outpouring of works of a masculine character, saying it not only balanced a children's literature that was full of feminine works, but also met Chinese children's need for masculinity. He said children were little and weak, so they needed to be spiritually strong: 'They need

***Yuan sheng tai suggests an
originally natural form of
childhood*** :

masculinity and strength ... the writers of masculine works are quite aware of it' (Sun 1995). Likewise, Cao Wenxuan, a famous writer of adolescent fiction and a professor in Peking University, has commented on the need 'to reconstruct our national characteristics through children's literature'. He claims that we should use children's literature as a means of shaping our children's character, making them active and aspirant, thus developing our national virtues: 'Writers of children's literature should keep such a grand and holy responsibility' (Cao 1998). Many children's literature researchers in China echoed this proposal and even made an expansive case that the main strength of children's literature to shape our national characteristics was doubtlessly masculinity. Jin Yanyu (1994), a researcher in Jiangsu Academy of Social Sciences, appreciated the adolescent protagonists of some masculine works and commended their independent

behaviour: ‘Only what breaks the traditional moulds can be hopeful. Such a breaking act is a redressing of our national character, a casting off of traditional standards, and a nurturing of future national character.’ Zhou Xiaobo, a professor in Zhejiang Normal University, gave the title ‘looking for manly men’ to these masculine works and thought the exploitation of the topic ‘definitely expressed people’s eagerness to shape the future spirit and character of our nation’ (Zhou 1999). The valuing of masculinity in shaping a nation’s character that we see in Chinese thinking about children’s literature proves Graham Dawson’s (1994) point: ‘If masculinity has had a role in imagining the nation, then so too has the nation played its part in constituting a preference for masculinity.’

Qin Wenjun is a leading Chinese children’s writer. She has written more than forty books, and won over forty awards. A ten-volume collection of her work to date, *Qin Wenjun Hua Xiang Wen Ji* [A collection of the fragrance of Qin Wenjun] (2005, Beijing: Jie Li Chubanshe) consists of five billion characters. She was nominated by CBBY for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2002.

Longing for gender equality

Although theorists have been eager to build a close relationship between masculinity and the prospects of a nation, they could still be depressed by Jia Li’s behaviour, because there are so many problems with Jia Li’s masculinity.

Jia Li identifies with masculinity, and rejects femininity. With a prejudice against all girls, including his sister, he often accuses them of superficiality. Just because his female classmate Du Xiaodu behaved as the perfect boy in his mind, Jia Li wished to *cheng xiong dao di* with her (ie to form some type of alliance with her – literally to build

Jia Li identifies with masculinity, and rejects femininity

Jia Li and Jia Mei publication details

<i>Jia Li in Junior High</i> (Shanghai: Shaonian Ertong Chubanshe, 1997)	<i>Nüsheng Jia Mei Xin Zhuan</i> [Jia Mei, the girl continued] (Shanghai: Shaonian Ertong Chubanshe, 1999)
<i>Nansheng Jia Li</i> [Jia Li, the boy] (Shanghai: Shaonian Ertong Chubanshe, 1993)	<i>Nansheng Jia Li Quan Zhuan</i> [All the stories about the boy Jia Li] (Shanghai: Shaonian Ertong Chubanshe, 1997)
<i>Nüsheng Jia Mei</i> [Jia Mei, the girl] (Hefei: Anhui Shaonian Ertong Chubanshe, 1993)	<i>Nüsheng Jia Mei Quan Zhuan</i> [All the stories about the girl Jia Mei] (Shanghai: Shaonian Ertong Chubanshe, 1999)
<i>Nansheng Jia Li Xin Zhuan</i> [Jia Li, the boy continued] (Shanghai: Shaonian Ertong Chubanshe, 1997)	

'brotherhood' with her). But when Jia Mei is helping her mother to rehearse lines for a play and trying to read the lines in a soft and tender voice in empathy with the sad hero, Jia Li criticises her: 'How could the hero be so womanlike? How could a man be effeminate like this?' In Jia Li's opinion, girls can be masculine but boys should never show any femininity. It is, indeed, a prejudice about gender and a kind of arbitrary judgement. So Jia Li's gender identification takes the form of lack of openness to others. By contrast, Jia Mei's attitude to gender is much more admirable than Jia Li's.

Jia Mei wanted to become a boy when she was younger: it could be said that her gender identity was distorted by male hegemony. But afterwards she got rid of that idea and tried to do well as a girl. Yet she

***By contrast, Jia Mei's
attitude to gender is much
more admirable***

has never indulged in femininity. It is proved that she could be wild if she wanted to be. Moreover, she longed to be a 'sincere and brave heroine'. Maybe Jia Mei is not one of the most typical female roles canonised by feminism, but her attitude to gender is much more open than that of Jia Li. Jia Mei's gender identification does not refuse to embrace 'difference' and 'otherness', which is a positive type of gender shaping, while Jia Li's limits him to 'sameness' and 'selfness', thus presenting a negative type of gender shaping.

Lin Wenbao and Qiu Zining, researchers on children's books at the National Taitung University in Taiwan, have discussed (2003) the relationship between gender equality and children's literature, and this is their conclusion:

Gender identification is not a process of conflict but a flexible course of mutual respecting and learning, no matter it is sisterhood, brotherhood or the intercommunication of opposite sexes. How could a masculine female build friendship with sisters or brothers? Or how could a feminine male enter peer groups or construct non-traditional collaboration with his peers ... Imaginary narratives on this subject help us to understand the significance of gender equality and enrich (or deconstruct) our imaginaries of gender.

This paragraph seems to me to be an appropriate description of the gender discourses of the novels under discussion here.

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Red, a professional lover, lives in the future. In this extraordinary world, human beings are too vulnerable to love. Sex is nothing more than an exchange of electro-encephalograms; love is a business. Red works on creating love for human beings, yet she actually knows nothing about love. Her sister, Green, is an architect of dreams. She sends Red to the ancient world by means of her 'dreamology'. In the ancient world, Red eventually understands what love is. However, she must return to her own reality. 'Cat eyes' is no ordinary sci-fi story. Zita Law is one of the most popular novelists in Hong Kong. All her love stories are full of imagination and fantasy. She often takes a diverse view on modern love. In this book, she views love from the future world, where everyone is too vulnerable to love, her story reflecting the fragility of humans in their environment and in their relationships. Her refreshing approach raises questions about love and vulnerability that not only inspire readers to take a new look at their own lives, but also stimulates them to reposition themselves in relationships.

Paul Lee



Zita LAW (pseudonym Snow Deep)

Mao Yan [Cat's eyes]

Hong Kong: Feel Company Limited 2006 298pp

ISBN 9629793539 (fiction, 12+)

Emotional Transmutation

in the Illustrations of Wang Xiaoming

by TANG BING



TANG Bing is an editor with Juvenile and Children's Publishing House in Shanghai, China. She has a particular interest in picturebooks and feminist theories and has written a book on feminist voices in children's literature



••• *Wang Xiaoming is one of China's leading illustrators for children. In this essay, partly based on a visit to Mr Wang's home in 2005 and correspondence with him, Tang Bing considers how Wang's work has changed over three phases of his career as an illustrator/writer*

In spite of his fame, Wang Xiaoming lives a simple life, planning for the whole year and proceeding step by step. He spends most of his time at home without outside interference, which probably offers him plenty of time for contemplation. When I visited him, he spoke of recent work that he was satisfied with, and about the artistic influence and psychological effects that Japanese cartoons for children had on Chinese illustrators' work; he spoke sometimes in a mocking and sometimes in an anxious tone.

Wang is a painter with strong personal charm and intense self-awareness. On that day, a typhoon was wildly sweeping the whole city. Listening to the wind howling as if to lift the roof, and to his conversation, you could feel that you were in another world. The house was swaying in the storm like a boat struggling in the sea, refusing to drift with the tide and going headlong on its own course.

Charming fairy tales

Huashengmi Yang de Yun [Peanut-like cloud] (1997), winner of the Chinese Writers' Union's Children's Literature Award – the highest prize for children's literature in China – is a fairy-tale collection, which contains twelve short stories, suitable for children of 2–5 years old. Wang both wrote and illustrated this book, which is unusual in China: as a rule, authors and artists belong to two separate professions. 'I like pictures, which offer aesthetic enjoyment,' Wang explained. 'I also like text, through which I can express ideas. I think that I am a good painter rather than a good writer.'

As a rule, authors and artists belong to two separate professions in China :

This fairy-tale collection includes many of Wang's wonderful early stories: 'Boat's dream', 'Mountain's birthday', 'The old pocket watch', 'The violoncello in the loft', 'Forgetful Grandpa Bear' and so on.

'Boat's dream' goes something like this:

The job of a boat is to transport people or goods from one place to another.

Boat thinks: 'What a wonderful thing, if I could fly, even for one time!' Seagull laughs: 'It is a marvellous dream!'

Boat tells his dream to Beacon and Beacon says: 'What! If a fish leaves water, it will dry out, so it would be for you too.'

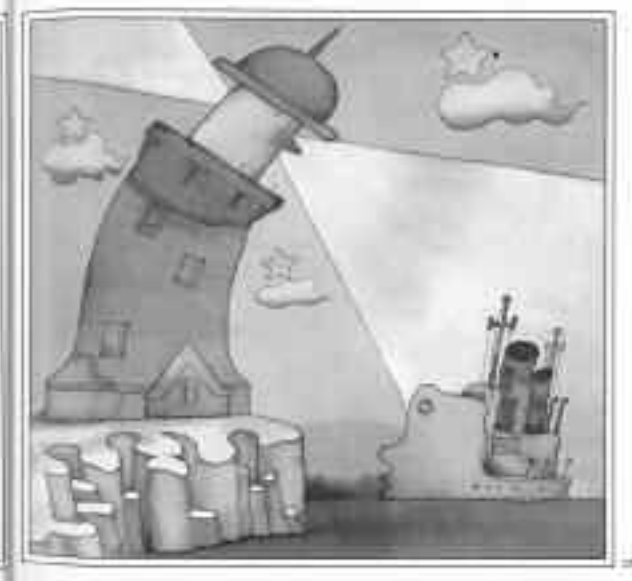
Flying Fish hears, and says: 'It is not a dream that is hard to realise, come with us.'

'Hoo – hoo –' And the fish, young and old, flap their wings and raise the boat into the sky. The boat stands on a cloud, with sea breezes blowing and the sun shining on his tummy, and says: 'Oh! Flying is not a dream any more!' Although he has to come back soon, he is now a boat who has had the experience of flying.

This is a story of the imagination. It tells children that everyone has his chance to make a breakthrough and to create a whole new world for himself. Wang utilises the traditional rule of three. When the boat has the dream of flying, he tells the seagull, who calls it 'a marvellous dream'. Here the boat looks like a babyish face under Wang's painting brush, and the seagull



Boat's dream



becomes his childish playmate. Then the boat asks the beacon, who bends down his tall body and says: ‘What! If a fish leaves water, it will dry out, and so it would be for you too.’ Here the beacon looks like an elder, expressing his concern. However, he doesn’t confirm his worry, only uses ‘would be’, which foreshadows Boat’s later flying with the help of the flying fish.

In the illustration (p. 57, left), the brightly coloured fish are ready to dash out from the left of the picture. Here the painter doesn’t show us the dried-up fish that Beacon mentions, which leaves a free space for children to imagine. Will the fish become dried up? What will be the fate of Boat?

***The text provides us with :
a clear, pure aesthetic :
experience :***

The whole tale, with its simple, rhythmical scenario, directly delivers the happiness of turning a dream into reality. The illustrations are not Wang’s best, but the text provides us with a clear, pure aesthetic experience.

‘The violoncello in the loft’ is another fairy tale from this collection, which goes like this:

A villa stands in a clearing in the forest. In the villa, there is a disused loft, with a wind-bell and an obsolete cello living in it.

The forest breeze always blows into the loft, and the wind-bell starts to sing, as if telling stories of wind, trees, birds, flowers and grasses to sweep away the loneliness of the cello.

Cello tries to tell Wind-bell about the music he used to play, but he cannot. All he can do is listen, and listen in silence.

One day, a little girl runs up to the loft. ‘Ah, what a beautiful wind-bell!’ she cries.

The little girl takes the wind-bell with her, steps down, and runs away, leaving only her footprints behind.

Cello can do nothing but listen to the wind-bell going away and away. He tries his best to say something, but fails.

At the end of the summer, several workers come to repair the loft. ‘Oh, a broken cello, throw it away,’ they say. And then, the cello flies out of the window and drops into the garbage bin outside.

At the moment of falling into the garbage bin, the cello explodes. The roar, the most powerful sound the cello has ever made, is rough and rotund. In an instant, Cello feels that he is back in the brilliant concert hall, playing a solemn melody. ‘The wind-bell might hear my music,’ Cello soothes himself, although he is broken into pieces.

From the story, could you feel a kind of sad glory? At the moment of being broken into pieces, the cello makes his most beautiful sound in life! Here, the wind-bell is not only an audience, but also an embodiment of the value of life to the cello. Wang exquisitely depicts the sorrow of seeing the wind-bell off, and the helplessness of being abandoned. However, when the cello makes his final sound, splendour and perishing occur simultaneously.

***From the story, could you :
feel a kind of sad glory? :***

Stories like ‘The violoncello in the loft’ are rare in this collection. The more popular tales are those with satisfactory and heartwarming endings, such as ‘Boat’s dream’, ‘The homesick tortoise’, ‘The happy beetles’ and ‘Forgetful Grandpa Bear’. Here, you can find warm pictures, crowded with brightly coloured and cute little animals. Wang is an expert in the use of colours and tints to create a fairy-tale atmosphere.

The picture Wang creates for *Pingguo Xiaoren Qiyu Ji* [Travels of an apple-child] (1996) is a



Travels of an apple-child

good example. The picture is quite crowded, with just one small blank area that creates a sense that the fish is flying in the sky. This blank spot also draws the eye to the flying fish in the forest and quickly to Straw Hat, our protagonist, sitting on a fin. It is a fantastic world. The forest is full of delicious foods – bread, sausage, pineapple, pear, a huge hamburger, ice cream, strawberries, as well as about ten smiling little animals, warmhearted and harmonious. Everyone looking at this picture will be attracted by the abundant details and pretty colours. The warm orange tone strikes the eye among the grass-green leaves. All the foods and animals have their own spaces without interference, and everything is well designed and kept in a delicate balance. Wang is very skilful in pattern design and the application of colour.

For a long time, this painting style has been mimicked, and a pleasantly warm, folksy happiness abounds in picturebooks for children in China. Animals and people are nicely rounded, looking honest and straightforward. But unfortunately, this pleasant, warm style has become a kind of standard for all children's illustrated books, and the pictures seem monotonous. Storytellers and artists are now critical of this cosy style, which tends to gloss over reality. When our children grow up, the argument goes, they will be

A pleasantly warm, folksy happiness abounds in picturebooks for children in China

incapable of facing real life, which has been glossed over by too much of this warm, cosy style of painting. Certainly, to a great extent, this phenomenon is related to our teaching methods and our understanding of literature.

Explaining science to children

Wang Xiaoming has been interested in science writing since 1991. 'Qingwa he Hama' [Frog and Toad] (2003) is a series of illustrated books about science, which consists of eight books – 'Frog and Toad', 'Lithosphere', 'Bacteria', 'Memo', 'Homing', 'Boundary', 'Money', 'Tongue and Nose'. Although it is not a fairy-tale series, it enchants children with its fine pictures and its clever language, which laconically introduces the science of everyday life and leads children to a world full of imagination and learning.

Here is how he explains the lithosphere in 'Lithosphere':

Our earth was originally a mass of seething gas.

The surface of our earth was agglutinated when it started to cool, just like milk, but it is not as smooth as milk, it is more like a wrinkled apple.

The sunken places are oceans.

The protruding places are the land, where we cultivate and build.

This agglutinated surface can supply all our human needs, for example: our kitchenware, fuel, foodstuff, vegetables and even jewels to decorate the king's crown.

There is fiery-hot magma beneath the surface, Wang goes on, explaining that the surface of the earth is not all in one piece, but is overlapped in

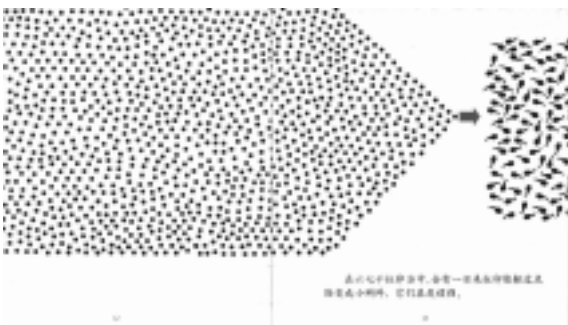


Frog and Toad

six floating layers. Sometimes these layers will break apart, which causes earthquakes, sometimes it will burst, which leads to a volcano ... and there is a secret about these layers: they are still floating, drifting about 1.3 centimetres a year. If you lived for a hundred million years, you might find a kangaroo strolling by your window, for Australia has floated here!

Wang's language is characteristically colloquial. This is one of the best science picturebooks in my view, for it reads just like a friendly conversation. The illustrations are done in a realistic style, but do not take realism to extremes. They have a flavour of purity and stillness without any multi-coloured giddiness about them.

The toad in 'Frog and Toad' is shown enjoying a rest in the vegetable garden, with a background painted only in green and grey. The flecks on the skin of the toad contrast with the green peas and grey toad itself. The whole picture is also



This is one of the best science picturebooks – it reads just like a friendly conversation :

balanced with the pea pods hanging down and the toad crouched in the middle. The whole picture is painted in shades of green without any other extraneous colours, thus giving us an atmosphere of serenity on a summer's afternoon.

The picture on the bottom left explains how out of six or seven thousand spawns, only about a hundred can escape the dangers of their lives and turn into tadpoles. Wang designs a big arrowhead pointing to the tadpoles with lots of dots symbolising the spawns. The whole picture is full of strong contrasts: many *v* few, black *v* white. The red arrowhead is very thin, just like a dangerous bottleneck through which the spawns have to pass in order to become tadpoles.

Wang gives us a vivid sense that life itself is a process of filtration :

Wang uses just three colours, hite, red and black, to give us a vivid sense that life itself is a process of filtration. His geometrical composition and visual contrasts create a sense of shock. The page design is also brilliant; for example, the illustration stretches across the double page spread to give a sense of time and space.

Anti-traditional adult fairy tales

Wang Xiaoming has been living as a freelance for the past decade. He once said that this kind of working style offers him room for thinking and that is very important. His working style can also provide him with a wealthy life, which is also very significant, since it means that he does not have to take on government jobs or jobs for publishing houses in order to make a living.

But according to Wang, the most important thing is not to be a professional painter but to have enough room for thinking.

In a recent letter he wrote to me that: 'Last year, I considered my work was very significant, but now, I consider it has no significance any more ... those tired workers sitting by the streets, looking at pedestrians passing by, which is the only amusement to them. This scene during my working time made me lose the heart for my work.'

Wang Xiaoming suddenly lost confidence in his work when he saw people who live a life of hardship. He began to question whether or not his work has any meaning. He even said that: 'Looking back on my life, the most significant and representative work is drawing the covers and the illustrations for the Chinese nine-year compulsory education textbooks, which are published for the children of the poor areas in the countryside.'

Based on these ponderings and meditations, he unofficially published a series of works with anti-traditional implications in 2005: 'Peanut-like fart', 'Protect baked sweet potato', 'Jade Butterfly', 'A drifting tree', 'Half a cake', 'Lion in a dream' and 'March dancing party'. These works mark a change from his traditional style of pleasant warmth to a kind of apperception of life, more or less like a Buddhist moment of realisation.

Some of these use a two-stage narration method: the first stage is the story itself; the second stage is commentary on the story, through which Wang Xiaoming expresses what he wants to say. Here we can also feel that he thirsts for disclosure and self-expression, and yearns for responses.

'Peanut-like fart' actually deconstructs and satirises 'Peanut-like cloud'. The two stories, with their search on the one hand for a cloud, and on the other for a fart, contrast the aesthetic with the mundane. However, worldly things are not always far from grandeur. When the snail finally finds a fart by the sea, he grows up, wandering

in the heavens and having a party with a flock of little farts. Here, witty words lightly relieve the oppressive theme. Sometimes, you will have to ask how our children could understand these adult fairy tales?

He thirsts for disclosure and self-expression and yearns for responses

'Protect baked sweet potato' and 'Half a cake' are childhood recollections triggered by foods. Baked sweet potato, which many adults are seeking everywhere, is a rarity in our metropolitan life. You never can find these baked potatoes in modern bars and places like that. So these people are laughed at and booted out. Eventually, they determine to build a sweet potato oven for the coming generation – a thought-provoking allegory.

Wang's illustrations offer a sense of real life, regardless of characters or contexts. The illustration from 'Protect baked sweet potato' (below) shows people robbing a bar. Wine bottles, telephones, lamps, tables and chairs, all of these form a modern bar; three men wearing fashionable overcoats are just like contemporary white-collar



Wang Xiaoming's honours

CBBY Little Pine Tree Award

The Noma Concours for Children's Picture
Book Illustrations

Golden Chanticleer Award (for Chinese film)

Golden Eagle Award (for Chinese TV)

National Comic Strip Original Script Award

Chinese Writers' Union Children's Literature
Award

workers. The picture is dominated by dark colours. Red and black colours blaze in the brown background. The characters run in, as if from far away, creating a diagonal which ends with the row of seats at the bottom left corner. The whole picture gives an amazingly effect, dignified and lively.

'Half a cake' is about remembering one's mother. As a child, Fu likes the cake his mother bakes, and his mother says that she will make cakes for Fu for ever; however, Mother leaves Fu only half a cake. Fu takes the half cake with him and goes to school far

away. As Fu grows up, wherever he goes, the half cake always accompanies him, for he can get the smell of Mother from it. This is a simple and moving story. Everyone will cherish the memory of a warm time, which will support you in your lifelong journey.

Wang says: 'Till last year, I find that when I create illustrations for others I am particular about variety and form; but for myself I am prone to true and plain methods. For most of my stories are from the real world – cities and streets, 'Ning-style' big beds and the kitchen range, the old rural windmill-shaker, a stone horse, a stone, a hanging leaf in the winter wind, a dead wood, a sound, a shadow ... Each story is a career, an experience, a gaze and a touched feeling, which can then be presented in the form of fairy tale. While drawing, I can taste real bitterness.'

From his recent works, it appears that Wang devotes his mind to his own feelings and experiences more than ever. He likes to catch the gleams of inspiration, seeking the most delicate emotions and poetic moments. 'Jade Butterfly' is a good example: tranquil pictures, glittery shades and shadows, a content process, just like a children's game of hide-and-seek. You don't know who is the player and who is entertained. Maybe you'll think what Wang is trying to tell is confused and inexplicable. Placed in the situation of the stories, you would not find a definite answer.

In 'Lion in a dream', the lion prefers to stroll among the dreams and realities, through which he finally finds his life with unexpected new brilliance. Obviously, Wang intends to get across something – momentary inner impressions, long accumulated passions, vain searches, loss of dreams, the sufferings of the real world. Individual experiences become the dominant themes, pushing stories to their ultimate.



图中为作者王小明所绘，画面中月亮高悬，树木枯槁，背景为深色的山峦，给人以神秘而幽静之感。

In the picture of 'The drifting tree' (opposite), the lonely tree is waving in the dark and stirring ocean; the moon is overcast by black clouds. The whole picture is so actual and depressing.

Conclusion

Since the 1990s, Wang's tales and illustrations have ranged from lively and warmhearted tales, to clear and concise popular science, to allegorical expressions of individual experiences. It's hard to say which style is better, for each of them is an artistic expression at a certain stage of the artist's development. Wang is changing, and with his changing moods and themes come changes in style. At present, Wang is working on his own consciousness, with little consideration for the market, the media or even for readers; he follows only his own artistic intuition and his work comes from the depths of his heart. He successfully merges personal experiences and imagination in his recent work. It will be interesting to see what he does next.

• **Individual experiences**
 • **become the dominant**
 • **themes, pushing stories to**
 • **their ultimate**

Caldecott medallist Ed Young presents a universal tale of sibling relationships in *My Mei Mei*, a Chinese adoption story 'inspired by my own daughter, who wished for a younger sibling and found both struggles and fulfilment when her wish came true'. Tonia, herself adopted from China, wishes for a *mei mei*, a little sister, but when her wish comes true, she admits that the baby who can't walk, talk or play 'is not what she ought to be'. As the sisters grow, they gradually begin to support each other and to fully experience the joy possible in the relationship of big sister and little sister.

Young's intricate collages, created with pastel and torn paper and set against colourful, patterned backgrounds, provide both a rich feast for the eye and suitable background for the changing moods of childhood. Born in Tientsin, China, Young came to the US to study architecture but became instead one of his adopted country's most honoured illustrators of children's books. His works have been translated into twelve languages, including Xhosa, Thai, Norwegian and Afrikaans.

Glenna Sloan



Ed YOUNG

My Mei Mei

New York: Philomel/Penguin 2006 32pp
 ISBN 0399243399

(picturebook/fiction, 4–10)

Introducing Jin Bo's Poetry for Children

by CHEN HUI



CHEN Hui is an assistant professor at the College of Literature at Beijing Normal University, where she researches the popularisation and application of children's literature. Her most recent publication is 'The Road to Children's Literature'

• Jin Bo, a professor at Capital Normal University, has been a children's writer and poet for over forty years. Chen Hui here introduces the work of this famous, prize-winning author to a global audience

Poems by Jin Bo quoted in this paper have been translated by Wang Tian Hong, Jin Bo's daughter; they have not been published in English

Jin Bo has published ten collections of poetry and many volumes of fairy tales and prose writings and has won many prizes in China. Some of his works have been adopted as Chinese texts for middle and primary school students. In 1992 he was China's candidate for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, owing to his outstanding contribution to Chinese children's literature.

Jin Bo's poetry is widely acclaimed by literary critics for the beauty of its language and rhymes, and the beauty of the poet's imagination, emotion and artistic conception. His poetry seems to use the poetic art to incorporate and integrate natural beauty and the beauty of innocence. The artistic beauty of Jin's poems can be attributed to his development of the Chinese poetic tradition that he has inherited.

Jin Bo expresses his abundant love of nature and of children in his poems. But his way of expressing emotion is conservative and controlled: he converts the fast-flowing and turbulent stream of feeling into a little brooklet, running gently and quietly. The poem 'Flying fireflies' exemplifies this:



Cover of *Wo Men Qu Kan Hai* [Let's go to see the sea] by Jin Bo (1998 Hangzhou: Children's Literature Press of Zhejiang)



A collection of Jin Bo's poems *Er Tong Shi Xuan* (1983 Beijing: People's Literature Press)

*I won't give you
Sunset at dusk
Evening stars in the sky
Let's go out
And catch some fireflies*

*Sunset clouds getting darker
Fading behind the evening dusk
Beautiful flowers hidden
Mountains leaving only tall shadows*

*But look
The fireflies from afar
Glistening and glimmering
Like flying stars with little wings*

*Pick a scallion from the garden
Put some fireflies inside
My child
This is my gift to you
a beautiful green light*

*Fireflies at your bedside
Let me tell you a fairytale
About that beautiful dream
In mid-summer night*

In this poem the writer conveys his deep love of children through switching and folding to various scenarios, restraining and winnowing, winding in a to-and-fro way, which creates an enduring appeal.

In his poetic creation, Jin Bo's artistic conception is expressed in poems that are the essence of wisdom and brevity. Some of his short poems are characterised by a vivid situational description, which carries a profound significance within just a few lines. Not only are readers given plenty of space for their imagination, but the charming effect of the poem also leads to endless reflections long after the poem has been read. For instance, in 'Stars

and Flowers' a landscape dotted with flowers, a night sky with countless stars and a child addressee compose a perfect picture embodying a fresh artistic conception that is characteristic of Chinese children's poetry:

*I like summer the best
Flowers covering the earth
Twinkle
Twinkle
Little flower
More than the stars in the sky*

*When evening arrives
Flowers fall asleep
I would count the stars in the sky
Twinkle
Twinkle
Little star
More than the flowers on the ground*

Most of Jin Bo's children's poems are easygoing and freely created. But he pays plenty of attention also to the format and tonality required in poetic creation, making efforts to achieve musical effects in his children's poems, balancing the syntactic structures and enhancing the phonological harmony. The poem 'Greenness of Nature' is not as formally disciplined or rhymed as many other of Jin Bo's poems, but it still presents readers with a concerto of sounds and images:

*My little daughter and I
Have come to look for you
The colour of green
Where are you?*

*Still in early spring
Mountains afar
The colour of green
Just like a transparent veil*

*We have come to look for you
But in mountains and forests
Nowhere to find your footprint*

*Wind comes and goes
Raindrops overnight
The sun is smiling
Suddenly, we found you*

*(Did you ride the wind?
Or hidden in raindrops
Or spread by the sun
The colour of green)*

*Mountains afar
Hills are green
Forests in the mountain
Trees are green*

*Buds on trees are green
Water in the lake is green
Even duck wings are green*

*Morning dew on grass
As green as crystal
Morning birds singing
As green as they sound*

*My little daughter
Her hair reflects your colour
Her eyes sparkle with your colour*

*My little girl
Has found spring
My little girl
Has found green
She also found out why
She has been given
Such a beautiful name*

In the poem the rhythm and the poet's emotions correspond harmoniously, producing a symphonic

Selected works by Jin Bo

Books of poetry

Echoes; Flowers that can fly; My yeti; Green sun, red apples; Between you and me; Moon night at woods; Flowers with snow; Let's go to see the sea

Prose and stories

Fairy tales of sapling leaves; Waiting for your knocking; Thanks to the by-gones

music. 'Greenness', the theme of the poem, appears time and time again, pushing verses to their climax, giving readers the enjoyment of lingering tender sentiments, intertwining and slowly subsiding.

The artistic features and aesthetic elegance of Jin Bo's poems can be traced to his heritage as a Chinese poet. His verses are brief and accurate and stylistically elegant, just like ancient Chinese poems. In the final decade of the 20th century, however, Jin Bo focused mainly on the study of Western classical lyrics, particularly on the sonnet form. Within five years he published the first children's poems in sonnet form in China, in an effort to establish connections between Eastern and Western children's poetic creation using this classical form. The collection was widely acclaimed and positively reviewed, and for example 'Woods in the Rain' became a widely loved poem:

*Forest in the rain
Is a fairyland!
Every tree tells a story
Walking inside
You have become
Part of their fairytale
You will discover
So much wonder*

*Sparkling raindrops rolling on the leaves
Spider web makes a necklace for you
Carpet made of falling flowers*

Soft and sweet

With frogs singing and dancing

Birds are also singing in the rain

Squirrels mesmerised

Shaking their fussy tails

Berries in the rain are even sweeter

Hedgehogs carry them home on their back

Even the raindrops are magic

Turning into mushrooms once on the ground

This poem describes a fully fledged artistic world, where the natural world of life mingles with the imaginary dream world of children. What the author gifts children is not only a wonderful fairy-land, but also a wonderful poetic world. The success of this poem marks a new achievement in the effort of transplanting Western sonnets to

Chinese, in the form of a children's poem.

Jin Bo's poetic creation is marked by an exclusively aesthetic pursuit. This pursuit is not towards the external description of the environment of children's lives or the events in their lives. Nor is Jin Bo satisfied with the poetic representation of children's interests, which is popular in other children's poetry. He stands alone in insisting on the artistic expression of emotions through poetry. He insists on a belief that the lyric is the form that best realises the pure aesthetic ideal to which he aspires in his children's poetry.

It is that persistent pursuit of an artistic conception of children's poetry, the unremitting effort, the selective adoption of and reference to the spirit of Chinese classical poetry, that make Jin Bo, author of widely disseminated and popular children's poems, the poet who can best represent the achievement of Chinese children's poetry.

Sansan experiences unforgettable times in the six years he spends in Sesame Primary School where his father is headmaster and his home is one of many thatched cottages. He witnesses and participates in heart-warming, affecting events. These include his close friendship with a girl, Zhi Yue; the change of heart of a selfish woman; the persistent struggles of a disabled boy to preserve his dignity; the suffering and triumph of a family who endure misfortune; love between father and son and attachment to the homeland.

In this coming-of-age novel, we see Sansan grow and develop. He learns to express compassion and pity. The author successfully reconstructs for the reader the process of a child's maturing. Characters are well developed. Description of beautiful environments is outstanding, and the language poetic. Emphasis on the beauty of love in human nature endows the work with eternal meaning.

MENG Lingyuan (SHI Yu trans)



CAO Wen-xuan

Cao Fang Zi [The thatched cottage]

Nanjing: Jiang Su Shao Niaan Er Tong Press (Jiang Su Children's Press) 2005 279pp ISBN 753461872X

(fiction, 9+)

How to Move our Children

by ZHANG ZHI-LU

(translated by SHI Yu)



ZHANG Zhi-Lu is a leading writer for children in China today, and was nominated by CBBY for the 2006 Hans Christian Andersen Award. His work is discussed in this issue in the article by TANG Rui



••• *In this article, one of China's leading writers for children discusses his commitment to reaching and moving his young audience and considers the moral value of children's literature*

Whenever I meet my young readers, they ask me to autograph their books; if their parents are there, they hope I can write some encouraging words for their children, something like, 'A soldier who doesn't want to become a general isn't a good soldier' or 'To walk your own way, let others talk'. But if they let me write anything I like, I'd put 'I wish you may be a happy child!'

'To be a happy child' is my most sincere wish for children, because I understand that a happy child is broadminded and optimistic, with a healthy mentality and a pair of bright, kind and natural eyes to look at the world. A happy child is a child with a free heart.

Happiness doesn't mean just laughing, but means having an optimistic attitude towards this world.

I know it's not easy to be a happy child. In China today, even 'happy' children have to face the pressure of examinations. Teachers and parents make them aware of competition. And that's without taking unfortunate or poor children into account. In some poverty-stricken mountain areas and rural villages, some children lead a very difficult life. For example, some children have to sell eggs to pay for their schooling and books.

***: I know it's not easy to
: be a happy child***

I'd like to write something to delight the children, to amuse them, and to set their imagination free. I won't tell them what should be done, or how to do it. But to let them think: What's wrong with this world? What can I do about it?

That's why I wrote the novel *Pi Li Bei Bei* [Thunderbolt Baby] and the movie script of the same name. I got the inspiration for this book from the experience of static electricity that we often get, especially in northern China, including Beijing, where the weather is often very dry. When we touch a metal doorknob, or open a metal mailbox with a key, or turn on the water tap, we get an electric shock, and between our hands and those metal things a tiny electric spark explodes.

In the story, a baby called Beibei is born with strong static electricity. Even his mother nursing him gets a shock. When the child grows up, his electric power also increases. Before he goes to school, his father sets three rules for him: Don't touch other children! Wear your gloves! Don't tell others that you are 'electric' or you'll become a monster in their eyes. However, Beibei wants to communicate with his classmates, he longs for friendship, though being 'electric' makes an ordinary life impossible for him.

The 'electric' Beibei is so fantastic. He can make an electric watch swallowed by a little dog play music, or make a toy spaceship in the playground fly around; he even enables a blind person to see light again after a stormy night... Beibei becomes a 'national treasure'. He is sent to the Academy of Science to be researched. But Beibei runs to the Great Wall to call the extra-terrestrials, and he asks them to remove his 'enormous power', because he wants to be an ordinary child like his friends.

This novel and movie made me well-known. I cannot say how valuable this work is in the field of literature, but in China, most of the children, including the grown-ups who used to be children, all know of Thunderbolt Baby. Wherever people talk about me, they mention Thunderbolt Baby.

***: True happiness emerges when
: children are moved by a
: spirit or a person who wants
: to make friends with them***



Me and my shadow

Why is this work more famous than other works of mine? I think it's because this story makes children happy. Yet this happiness is not only laughter, but is about the readers' concern for the destiny of the child. If the story were only about fantasy, fun and jokes, they wouldn't feel so happy; they wouldn't have this deep impression and remember this happiness for ever.

I believe that true happiness emerges when children are moved by a spirit or a person who wants to make friends with them. This is why I wrote 'Do you have mouse pencils?', 'Me and my shadow' and 'Tortoises also surf the net'.

I was a teacher for several years. Some experiences, though tiny, are unforgettable. Every time the students had to change their seats, a pretty girl always asked for a seat near the window. To sit near the window, you can enjoy the bright sunlight, fresh air and the scenery outside. So after some time, I told her: 'All the children are equal. How can you always ask for this seat?' She blushed and fidgeted, began to walk away, but turned back and said in a very small voice: 'Teacher, I have armpit odour...' Then her tears gushed out, and I didn't know how to comfort her. After that, I think it's a shame to force others to say something they don't want to say. An adult man may not consider body odour a serious issue, but a little girl would keep it as the ultimate secret. I felt nervous, if only I were a kind older woman, the girl might be able to talk about her problem without feeling so agonised.

I often meet very strict older people. Whenever their children get bad results in the exams or make some mistakes, they question them sternly:

***My work is not to encourage
children to go to university,
but to tell them how to
face this world***

• 'What do you have to say about this? What? Speak!'
• But the children won't speak. The adults think the
• children won't tell the truth, so they grow more and
• more anxious and angry. Later I understand it is not
• that the children don't want to speak, but they don't
• know how to say what they want to say.

Sometimes children don't want to speak, sometimes they don't know how to express themselves. If we can listen to their voice, and tell them they can deal with their pain bravely, for this kind of pain is shared by others, they will be relaxed.

My novel *Chan Wei Shui Ming* [For whom the cicada sings] aims to express this feeling of upset. There are only a few children who will become leaders in the future; most of them will be ordinary people. But if they are kind and upright, why can't we let them be happy? Moreover, who knows whether they can become the 'pillars of the state' or not? I sympathise with those children. The heroes in my novels like 'Me and my shadow' and 'Tortoises also surf the net' are such ordinary or even

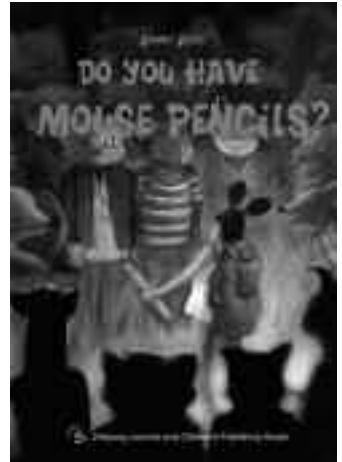
backward children. My work is not to encourage them to go to a famous university, but to tell them how big this world is, how we can get along well with others, and how to face this world.

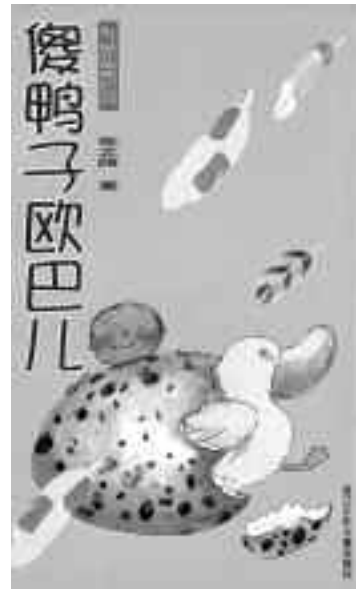
Inspiring an enthusiasm for education is beneficial to children's growth; but it should not be the focus of children's literature. In recent years, 'school life' has become a hot topic for children's literature. Many novels of that kind depict students leading a comfortable life yet still feeling depressed; they reflect the flashy surface of city life and have fashionable ingredients – the basketball game, the internet, pop stars, famous brands, cool boys and pretty girls who outwit teachers and parents, love between boys and girls, yearning for others' understanding – they but don't try to understand others. The influence of the fast-food culture is more or less revealed in fiction like that.

Being faced with abundance and a developed economy, how should we deal with the affluent life? This is a serious issue deserving everyone's attention, especially that of children's writers. How can we enrich children's minds and make them healthy? The function of children's literature cannot always be to meet children's needs for enjoyment, but to guide them to understand and empathise with others, to develop a healthy personality, to have the wish to volunteer. My book 'Do you have mouse pencils?' is about a child's adventures, during which he not only comes across many fantastic and funny things, but also realises the happiness and bitterness of other families outside of his home.

I also write about rural life. Because of their poverty, rural children cannot afford to be cool, to enjoy the 'depression' of the students in the city, or to talk about the material culture in the affluent city, and some writers take it for granted that you have to write differently for the poor and the rich, since they assume the works have different social functions. As a result, their work cannot reach the quality expected by readers, because of the writers' shallow understanding of school life in the countryside and the cities.

My novel *Kong Xiang Zi* [The empty trunk] is about an exploited rural village. Nobody pays any attention to school or education. The teachers lead a poor life. A boy 'invents' a shoe-cleaning machine to help his father. In fact, he hides himself inside a machine about the size of a refrigerator. When people put their feet inside, he cleans the shoes. Someone reports the truth. The officer in charge of the market asks the father to open the machine in public, but they find nothing inside. People are shocked, especially the father. In the deep night, a honeybee flies out of the machine, makes three circles around the father and grandmother, and then flies towards the moon ... I have great sympathy for children who are unable to go to school.





Left to right: Unlawful wisdom, Ultimate hallucination, Stupid duck Oboe

It is not forbidden to write about suffering as well as happiness, the serious as well as the funny. The key lies in how to write about it. While writing about pain and the heavy-hearted, I try to fill children with hope for the future, so that they understand that to conquer difficulties they need to make an effort and thus lead a meaningful life.

Nowadays, children have far better conditions both materially and spiritually than their parents. But at the same time, the grown-ups are worried about the children. If they grow up like hot-house flowers, how can they be independent when they step into society? They never taste the bitterness or frustration, how can they get along with others? Thus we have ‘frustration education’, military training and opportunities to live with children in poor areas. That’s good! But it should be noted that most of these educational programmes are at the material level, and are about difficult living conditions in the areas of food and clothes! It is formal education rather than the enlightenment of the soul.

At a spiritual level, since all parents wish their children to become leaders, the common goal is to stimulate children to vigorous efforts. Thus stimulation becomes the only content of education for many families. However, this kind of spiritual education is incomplete.

Even though they are very young, children should bear responsibility as their parents and teachers do :

There are many more important things for a child growing up, for instance, the meaning of life and living, how to get along with others, to respect their elders and to take care of the younger ones, to value justice, to find love, the experience of beauty, the importance of environmental protection ...

Because of the development of the economy, the explosion of information, the popularity of the internet, children can now get in touch with unprecedentedly abundant ideas and knowledge. But unfortunately, when parents give their entire attention, money and love to their own children, they become indifferent to other children. And some children become fragile and weak, some become ferocious and cruel; criminals are younger and younger as youth crime increases. It seems that as children become 'cool', their friendship, and their feelings towards their parents and teachers also become cool.

This is an incident that happened in one of my meetings with the children. There were about twenty students – all literature lovers – from schools of various provinces. The children surrounded me and handed me their compositions. While we were talking, one girl suddenly changed position and seemed sick. I could see that she was ill, so I anxiously asked how she was feeling, but another child said, 'Teacher, you needn't worry about her, let's continue ...' I was shocked. How can people be so indifferent when there is someone sick?

The hero of my *Fei Fa Zhi Hui* [Unlawful wisdom] is a middle-school student called Lu Yu. He leads a happy life and likes to help others, but doesn't do well in study. His father is a famous neurosurgeon. To make his son clever, he inserts an 'intelligence chip' into the boy's abdomen. Lu Yu becomes very clever, but also very cruel, he doesn't even know his father. It is a fantasy, but its moral connects closely to reality.

If we continue feeding children cream and chocolate, we spoil them at the material level. If we continue improperly regarding the responsibility and hardship which children should take as suffering brought by the adults' world, we spoil them on the spiritual level.

And that makes our children tend to blame everyone but themselves, and make them fragile and weak. Even though they are very young, with such thin shoulders, in the moral sense, they should bear responsibility as their parents and teachers do. If a child, who is inexperienced in social life, makes a mistake and is reprimanded by his parents; he may take this for granted, or at most he may think he's very unlucky. But suppose a neighbour came along and criticised the parents, saying: 'How can you blame the child so sternly?' Now the child is very likely to cry! Not because of being moved by the neighbour's sympathy, but from a feeling of being wronged. At that moment, in the child's eyes, the neighbour is nice and understanding, but the neighbour's attitude spoils the child.

To guide children along the right path, criticism is as important a method as encouragement. When children make a mistake, you must tell them: 'You are wrong, you must take responsibility for this!' A child always living in ease and comfort can hardly be moved!

***The main aim of
children's literature is to
mould children's character
and sentiment*** :

The main aim of children's literature is to mould children's character and sentiment. At the same time, like other elements of society, children's literature should help in children's aesthetic education and should teach them the value of life and how to take responsibility for their actions. The word 'mould' gives the feeling of a slow and gradual process, but it's like the drizzle moistening the land, though it seems soft as silk, it can rust metal and erode holes in stone. The moulding function of children's literature is large and deep especially for children growing up.

For a children’s writer, his love for children should be extensive and deep, rather than only to meet the temporary wish of the children. Only to fulfil the wishes of children is not true love, it’s a misunderstanding of love. I like children, I love children, but I don’t like to pander to them.

Only to fulfil the wishes of children is not true love, it’s a misunderstanding of love :

Society and propaganda influence both children and our creation of children’s literature. This kind of influence can be positive or negative, on the surface or at a deep level, obvious or obscure, left by history or formed in recent creation and critique, impossible to change or possible to adjust through communication. In my opinion, it is very helpful for current children’s literature creators to analyse those impacts.

Education for exams has both good and bad impacts; and it evidently influences children’s literature. People seldom mention its historical reasons or advantages, but focus on its disadvantages, which become topics for writers. This is beyond reproach. Some educationalist said jokingly: ‘It’s very simple to improve China’s football game – just make it part of the university entrance examination!’ Quality education and education for exams can exist together in theory, but contradict each other in practice.

The world is changing quickly. It makes a gap between the children and their parents, who experience different environments, and the grown-ups lack preparation and experience to educate children. From many TV programmes, movies and books, children don’t learn friendship and compassion, but cheating and ideas like ‘The winner is the king while the loser is the thief.’

In this situation, we ought to tell children that we should love this world. Love and justice are the most important ideas in my books. Confucius raised the idea of ‘benevolence’; Buddhism proposes ‘forgiveness’; Christianity values love; modern China has a concept of a harmonious society – these all tell us to love humanity and to love the world.

In the 1990s, I wrote *Di San Jun Tuan* [The third regiment] and a long fantasy *Sha Ya Zi Ou Ba Er* [Stupid duck Oboe]. In 2004, I wrote the science fiction *Ji Xian Huan Jue* [Ultimate hallucination]. In those books, I try to tell children, whatever difficulties you’ll come across, you should face this world bravely. The ugly or evil before us is temporary; there will always be the power of love and justice to beat them. Love and justice are eternal.

My greatest wish is to move children by my work. If they can tell me why they are moved, I’ll be satisfied.

• In this article, Professor Wang outlines the
 • changes in society that have taken place in
 • recent decades in China and the effects
 • these changes have had on the themes and
 • nature of Chinese children's literature and
 • on its publication and production

The 'New Period' of Chinese contemporary history spans thirty years, from October 1976 (the end of the Cultural Revolution) to the present day. People usually consider 1992, the point at which the market economy was established in China, as the beginning of the later New Period. Terms like 'reform', 'policy of openness', 'seeking truth from facts' are in widespread and popular use to describe the atmosphere of the China of the New Period, a changing society and a country that is in the process of very rapid modernisation. As Chinese society undergoes great change, there is also both fusion and collision between Chinese and foreign cultures and literatures.

***As Chinese society undergoes great
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Against this background, children's literature, as a wing of contemporary Chinese literature, has also seen great changes and progress. When we look at the history of Chinese children's literature, we can say for sure that the New Period is the time during which Chinese children's literature has experienced the fastest development, the greatest change, the most remarkable achievements and has most been a subject of discussion. Chinese children's literature of the New Period gives us plenty to talk about.

Changing concept of children's literature

The first thing to say about Chinese children's literature of the New Period is that it focuses on children themselves, and that is a mighty change. In the past, children's literature used to concentrate on adults' will and educational aims, but now it concentrates on serving the target group of children's literature – the children who read it. In line with this change, New-Period children's literature has gone beyond the idea of

by WANG QUANGEN



WANG Quangen is a professor of the College of Chinese Language and Literature at Beijing Normal University, Director of the Chinese Children's Literature Research Centre, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Children's Literature Research Association and the author of several books on Chinese children's literature

Chinese children’s literature of the New Period focuses on children themselves :

viewing children’s literature only as a tool to enlighten children, following academic requirements for the right kind of children’s literature. In the past, it was believed that the writer of children’s literature is the builder of our national nature for the future, and there were ideas

about the three levels of children’s literature, the three motives of children’s literature, the double-logic fulcrum of children’s literature and so on.

In recent times, children’s literature has gone through the following stages: it has come back to literature, it has come back to children, and it has come back to the individual. But the second of these is the most important: bringing literature to children to help them to construct their spiritual life. Coming to the children is the high-flying aesthetic flag of Chinese New-Period children’s literature. It is by coming to the children that children’s literature will influence the development of the spiritual character, cultural mentality, aesthetic accomplishment and rational quality of the next generation.

Encouraging initiative

Initiative is about surmounting difficulties and being adventurous. It is also the quality that sparks children’s literature. Initiative is a proud quality that exists only in human beings. It can make one give out light just like an angel, illuminate others and oneself, life and spirit, novels, fairy tales, poems and prose. It is just like Yan Wenjing’s never-resting song of the little stream, which comes to the port where the next ship will set off and decodes the secrets in the great calabash despite being exhausted.

These are our New-Period writers for children: Cao Wenxuan, who sticks to the classical literature, following the eternal Thatched Cottage; Qin Wenjun, with her moving realistic stories of a boy named Jia Li; Dong Hongyou, with his Dream of One Hundred Chinese Boys written in a variety of genres; Ban Ma, who likes the Imaginary Fish which is full of a probing spirit; Shen Shixi with an animal story about the Red Milk Goat; and Zheng Chunhua who writes about the Big-Headed Son and Small-Headed Father. We have all kinds of lively, emotion-expressing fairy tales, interactive TV programmes, poems for

Initiative consciousness has provided New-Period children’s literature with a spiritual resource for its development :

young people – the range of work is wide and varied. Illustrated books, humorous stories, books about nature, the literature of how young people live today, books that depict the selfhood of young people – initiative consciousness has provided New-Period children’s literature with a spiritual resource for its development.

Modern media

The third thing to mention is the influence of modern media. Before the New Period, when China was under the pain of the Cultural Revolution, we had only two publishers of children's reading material, twenty writers of children's literature, and two hundred editors of children's reading material. And there were only two hundred children's titles published each year, most of which were reprints. After the birth of the New Period, the creation, compilation and publication of Chinese children's literature and reading material has changed profoundly.

After the birth of the New Period, the creation, compilation and publication of Chinese children's literature and reading material has changed profoundly

By 2001, however, the Chinese Writers' Association had 6442 members, including 500 children's writers – or up to 3000 if we add in the children's writers in the local writers' associations. All over the country (excluding Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao), there were 31 presses specialising in children's reading material, as well as another 130 presses (especially the local education presses) which also published some books for children. In the year 2000, a total of 7004 children's titles were published, amounting to 168 million copies – over six billion pages (according to Wu Shangzhi in the comment of Chinese books published in 2001). What great changes! What encouraging numbers!

And then, it must be remembered that we can propagate children's literature and reading

material not only on paper, but also over the internet, in audio form, as movies and television programmes, and in this way, the joys of children's literature can be brought to millions of young readers.

Local differences

For historic and economic reasons, the eastern areas of China have better production and output conditions for children's literature than the western areas, especially the municipalities of Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu. In line with the social transformation and economic development of the New Period, the Chinese social situation has undergone deep and complicated changes. Diversified economic situations and access to material benefits, diversified living styles, diversified methods of organising society and diversified jobs and kinds of work have appeared. These changes in society have brought new themes and new targets to contemporary literature, including children's literature. Meanwhile, they have also greatly changed the creation as well as the production and output of resources. These changes have become more marked since the enforcement, since the late 1990s, of the Western Development Programme. Now it is hard to tell which is stronger, east or west. Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, which used to be the four most important centres of production of children's books are now only four among many such centres.

In the 1980s, the Chinese mainland and Taiwan began to communicate with each other. In 1997, Hong Kong was returned to China, and in 1999, Macao came back. These events greatly promoted the development of children's literature in the four places mentioned above. This is the important gain and landscape of New-Period children's literature.

When this charming little piglet has his meal, he makes noises that sound like 'Hirihurn' and this sound becomes his name. Hirihurn has loads of humorous adventures.

Kidnapped by Big Wolf, he is meant to be a snack for the wolf cubs, but he makes a cunning escape. He saves the wolf cubs from the mouth of Moony Bear and becomes Mrs Duck's bodyguard. He even frightens away Great Tiger. For his cleverness and bravery, he earns the title, Knight Piglet.

Hirihurn is a kind-hearted, unsophisticated piglet who sometimes is treated unfairly by mean people. But he is ever optimistic, always turning bitterness into sweetness. He is like a 6-year-old boy, simple but not stupid, who enjoys eating, sleeping and snoring in school. What may seem like defects are really childlike behaviour. A profound truth hides behind this tale: adults need to accept a child for what he is. The brightly coloured pictures, created by a nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen illustrator award, depict with liveliness the many adventures of Hirihurn.

MENG Lingyuan (SHI Yu trans)



SUN Yun-jun (QIU Zhao-ming illus)

Xiaozhu Xilihulu
[Piglet Hirihurn]

Shenyang: Chun Feng Wen Yi Press
(Vernal Breeze Press) 2003 160pp
ISBN 753132457
(illustrated storybook, 3-9)

Based on a true story from the author's father-in-law, *Landed*, a picturebook for older readers, recounts a little-known chapter in Chinese American history. The 12-year-old Sun wishes to join his father, an importer with a business in San Francisco, in America, aka Gum Saan, Gold Mountain. Landing will be difficult and surely delayed because of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which detains Chinese for as long as a year at Angel Island. Sun must study hard to answer the American officials' questions and prove his identity as a 'true son'. ('Paper sons' at this time fabricated identities to enter the United States.) Held alone for a month and interrogated, the child finally passes the tests and is landed.

Determination and quiet acceptance of what must be accomplished are expressed in static but poignant full-page oil paintings in shades of green and sepia. Hazel Rochman, in an American Library Association review, suggests that this book be paired with Chinese American Laurence Yep's *Tongues of Jade* (1991). *Kirkus Reviews* comments, 'This testament to the pull of "Gold Mountain" offers a bit of Chinese American history in a handsome package.'

Glenna Sloan



Milly LEE (Yangsook CHOI illus)

LANDED

New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2006 40pp
ISBN 0374343144
(picturebook, 8-12)

Paving a Road to the Azure Sky

The Present and Future of Chinese Children's Publishing

by HAI FEI

(translated by SHI Yu)



HAI Fei is president of CBBY, director general of China Children's Press & Publication Group and a member of CPCC (Chinese People's Consultative Conference)

... This article presents a publisher's perspective
... on children's literature in a China that is
... rapidly developing and developing commercial
... contacts with the outside world

The beginning of the 21st century is the time for China's children's publishers to quicken their steps towards the world. Chinese children's literature is changing and at the same time it is opening to the outside world, and now, paving a road to the azure sky, China's children's literature publishing is quickly merging into the mainstream of international children's publishing.

Chinese children's publishing today

China's children's publishing is experiencing unprecedented development. It is supported by government policies that encourage development, but it also faces the world market of globalised competition. There have been great improvements in the numbers of books published and in publishing standards, and in fact the publishing of children's books has now reached saturation point; thus the competition is growing more and more intense.

The policy environment

Nowadays, China's children's literature has the attention and support of the government. In February of 2004, a government document pointed out that

The young people are the future constructors of our country, and the successors of China's socialism. ... Newspapers, magazines and other children's publications should take it as their responsibility to provide better spiritual nourishment for young people, and try to be good teachers or friends to help them broaden their horizon and improve themselves, and try to be a spiritual garden in which the young can mould their characters and enjoy themselves.

In May 2004, President Hu Jintao emphasised this point at a conference on enhancing and improving young people's ideology and morality:

We should enhance the sense of social responsibility of the mass media, in order to create a favourable public environment for the

ethical education of our youth. Our strategy is to provide more and better cultural products and cultural services for young people.

In June 2004, Shi Zong-yuan, Director of the General Administration of Press and Publication told journalists:

Without prosperity in publishing for young people, China's press and publishing industry cannot achieve great prosperity. To improve the market environment of China's publishing, we should first improve the market environment of youth publishing.

The market environment

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 80s, China adopted the policy of openness and reform, and gradually established a market-economy style of socialism; and in the 21st century, after joining the WTO, China further opened its economy. In the past, foreign capital

Foreign enterprises bring both a challenge to China's children's publishing and advanced management ideas and methods :

could enter China's children's publishing market only through the buying and selling of publication rights; that has changed, and the focus is now on investment by foreign interests through co-operation with domestic publishers or bookshops in order to gain a market in China and increase the number of Chinese consumers. Moreover, China has opened the book market to foreign capital. The foreign enterprises in China's market, for example, the Walt Disney Company, AOL Time Warner Inc., Bertelsmann

AG, McGraw-Hill and the Pearson Group, have advantages in capital power, book quality, management and marketing. They bring both a challenge to China's children's publishing and advanced management ideas and methods, and they promote the reformation of China's children's publishing in the globalised market.

The development level of children's publishing

With the support of domestic policy, in a market full of globalised competition, China's children's publishing houses focus on both social interest and profit.

According to data released by the General Administration of Press and Publication in 2003, 7588 children's titles were published in China (of which 4646 were original editions), amounting to almost two hundred million copies with a value of about 1.5 billion RMB. Over half a million copies (worth over a million US dollars) were exported; and about 1.5 million dollars' worth of children's titles were imported. China, with 367 million young readers, has truly become a country of children's publishing, and has marched far away from the book shortages of the early period of the new nation, when there was only one book to 12 children.

Publishers

Since the introduction of the new policy of openness, China's specialist children's publishing houses have increased from two to thirty, the staff employed in children's publishing have gone from 200 to more than 3000. Writers and illustrators of children's literature have also

China's specialist children's publishing houses have increased from two to thirty :

increased from about 200 to more than 3000. Nowadays, 523 of the 569 publishers in China are competing to publish children's literature.

Publication projects

The General Administration of Press and Publication places children's literature fifth in the list of priorities in the National Focus on Book Publishing plan. Publishing for children is considered as an independent project in the planning system. Among the 1200 projects of the ninth five-year project, 85 are concerned with children's literature, about 7% of the total number. In 1996, China carried out a project on children's animation publication, and five animation publication bases were established in the east, north, middle-south, north-east and west of China. Fifteen major series of children's animation books started publication.

Features of Chinese publishing for children

There are five main features of children's publishing in China. First, it pays great attention to the national interest: more than 800 titles about patriotism are published every year. Second, it focuses on originality in children's literature: more than a thousand original children's titles were published in China during the period of the ninth five-year project. Third, it emphasises popular science literature: the proportion of science literature for children has been increasing and the importation of science literature rights has become a focal point in the rights market. Fourth, it explores new models of books: novelty books, which function as both book and toy; new types of video cartoon books; books published as a result of the interaction of paper and electronic media – these have set a new fashion for children's literature publishing. Five, it imports books: a large number of very good foreign children's books – for example, *The Adventures of Tintin*, the Harry Potter series, *Rich*

Dad, Poor Dad, Hello! Is Anybody There? – arrived in China during the ninth five-year project period. Statistics show that more than 7.8% of the children's literature in China is imported. They have all been bestsellers in China.

Publishing standards

Since it has become involved in global competition, China's children's publishing industry is re-examining its own practices and is seeking to upgrade its standards. First, many specialised children's publishing houses have begun to formulate their own market strategy and to seek regional alliances so as to consolidate their regional market. For instance, the book fair organised by the children's publishing houses of the six provinces in the east of China controls the main channel of the children's book market in this area.

Second, there is more and more co-operation among the publishing houses. For instance, the Hope Publishing House and the Petrel Publishing House of China joined forces to explore books to complement the curriculum; the 21st Century Publishing House and China Youth Press together founded the Oriental Lion Cub Culture Company to explore the youth market; some children's publishing houses have co-operated with art presses, integrating the literary advantages of the children's publishing houses with the illustrative advantages of art presses, and have achieved good results.

China's children's publishing industry is re-examining its own practices

Third, many publishing houses have moved beyond their own region to open branches in the capital city, using the rich publishing resources of Beijing to expand their brands and power. This phenomenon was included in the Top Ten News

about China's children's publishing in 2001.

Fourth, children's mass media groups have emerged. In May 2000, China Children's Publishing House merged with China Juvenile News Office, forming China's largest mass media group for children. Both of these famous presses were founded half a century ago. This group boasts three presses, five newspapers, ten magazines, thousands of books, a website, 'China Children's Website' (www.ccppg.com.cn), and a television series called 'The understanding sister' made in co-operation with CETV (China Education Television).

The market for Chinese children's literature

Generally speaking, Chinese children's publishing is developing well. However, it will soon reach its production peak and the market for children's literature will move from under-supply to over-supply. The Yearbook of China's Publication shows that from 1997 to 2000, the total amount of Chinese children's publishing decreased, the profits also decreased, and overstocking became a common problem for children's presses. According to the statistics of Beijing's largest bookstore, Beijing Books Building, the books in the children's section sold 9.5 million RMB worth of books in 1999, and 15.35 million in 2000 – an increase of almost 60 per cent in one year; in 2001, the figure was 17.8 million, an increase of 16% on the previous year. Though the sales volume kept increasing, the rate of increase decreased. In the spring of 2002, the increase proportion was only 7.3%; and the sales volume for children literature and children's encyclopaedias decreased by 15% and 18% respectively.

From these data we can see that the market need for children's literature is gradually decreasing; thus, children's publishing should also be slowed down: publishing for children in China has reached saturation point.

Market structure

While the market stage of China's children literature turns from shortage to over-supply, that is to say from a seller's to a buyer's market, the competition in children's publishing grows more and more intense. Since it is easy to produce children's books, and there are so many readers, this field seems more and more attractive.

Specialised children's publishers are scattered all around the country

Specialised children's publishers are scattered all around the country, generally one publishing house for each province. Thus they cannot easily compete with each other. In the last two years, publishers' sales volumes decreased and their proportion in the market also shrank, and what is more worrying is that no book from children's publishers was listed on the Board of Top Seventy Best Sellers in 2000. The result of all these changes is that fierce competition has broken out among publishers.

Sectors in competition in the market

Four sectors are currently in competition in the area of children's publishing in China, and there is also internal competition within each of these sectors. They are the specialist children's publishers, the older general publishers, the private booksellers and foreign media.

The relationship among specialist children's publishers has changed from co-operation in the face of external competitors to competition among themselves. One of the major forms of competition is that they quickly 'clone' the new hot topics in the market. For instance, 'The ten myriad whys' of Shanghai Youth & Children Press, the 'Big world' series of China Children's

Press & Publication Group, the baby paintings of the 21st Century Publishing House, the 'Big maze' series of Sichuan Juvenile & Children Publishing House – all have been slightly changed by some other presses and then published under new titles.

Another method of competition is to 'grab' the copyright. For example, some old and influential books like 'Up and down the five thousand years' and 'Little soldier Zhang Ga' experienced changes in their copyright owners.

Relying on their advantage as old brands and on the excellence of human resources and capital, the old domestic publishers of China have also begun to set up children's divisions and to publish large amounts of children's books. For example, an established publisher grasped the opportunity to get into the children's market by importing the Harry Potter series, which stayed on top of the bestsellers' lists for 23 months. The university presses and the education presses like the Northeast Normal University Press, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Liao Ning Education Press, have all begun to achieve a good position in the children's books market.

Meanwhile, individual booksellers have become a new element in the publishing business. They use various (legal or illegal) methods to challenge a publishing industry that used to be solely state-owned. Their focus has shifted from social literature and art literature to children's literature. They organise their own resources to edit and plan, use much more flexible methods and channels to expand their markets, and occupy a large proportion of the market.

Foreign presses and mass media consortia also have part of the Chinese domestic market in children's books. They co-operate with Chinese partners to publish their titles in Chinese versions, setting up readers' clubs, founding cultural companies, buying rights and so on. Their capital power and the quality of their books, management and marketing strategy are currently invincible in the field of children's publishing.

Looking ahead

China's children's publishing has been developing rapidly from the beginning of the 21st century. However, compared with the fast-growing needs of the times and of young readers, and the need to take part in globalised competition, China's children's publishing needs to quicken its pace if it is to merge into the mainstream of the international children's publishing.

Children's publishing in China has established friendly relations with more than 600 publishers in over 50 countries. Every year, nearly a

The relationship among children's publishers has changed from co-operation to competition

hundred people are sent to attend various international book fairs and conferences. The rights business is expanding, and there are more and more joint publications. Based on that, China's children's publishers should continue their policy of opening to the outside world and enhance international co-operation.

First, we shall increase imports – to enable Chinese children to see the same world as children in the rest of the world. Good overseas children's literature should be imported, the norms of international co-operation should be improved, simple rights-buying should be replaced by various kinds of co-operative publishing, international exchange in publication should be enhanced.

Good overseas children's literature should be imported, forms of international co-operation should be improved :

Second, bilingual books should be developed for small children, so as to help Chinese children to learn English. Third, we should seek new forms of co-operation. Fourth, overseas branches should be set up, so that we can know the latest overseas market news and spread China's excellent books into overseas markets.

Children's publishing used to be the most active force in the publishing industry in China. However, China's children's publishing structure with specialised children's publishers scattered one in each province can hardly rival the powerful international publishing groups. China's children's publishing needs to imitate the general reformation of the country's publishing industry, readjust the overall make-up of the industry, reform and optimise its industrial structure, develop large groups of publishers, newspapers and distribution companies to bring together the advantages of brand, resources, capital and markets, in order to strengthen itself for international competition.

With the popularity of broadcast, TV and audiovisual products, e-books and the internet, traditional paper-based publishers should embrace the modern media. According to the statistics of China Internet Information Centre, in July 2001, six million students in mainland China were internet users, 5% more than six months previously. Young people represent the new force for the future and are the ultimate target for the new mass media services. China's children's publishers should readjust their attitude towards this 'TV generation' or 'net generation' and take advantage of new media so as to make the traditional and modern mass media prosperous together, to transform children's publishing from traditional to modern and to follow international trends.

China is a big country for publishing. We need a lot of powerful publishers standing on the peak of the world publishing industry, people of high calibre, strong in international communications, good at

business management, well-informed about the publishing industry and knowledgeable about child psychology. To solve this problem, first, we should enhance business training, frequently organise lectures on the new knowledge, create brain-storms among the publishing personnel.

Second, we should set up a whole system to discover talented people, attract them, train them and cultivate them. China's children's publishing should have well-known writers, who can represent the highest level of Chinese children's literature and culture, and some art images, which can represent China's children's literature and are well-liked by children all around the world. The Hans Christian

China's children's publishing should have well-known writers, who can represent the highest level of Chinese children's literature and culture

Andersen Awards have a history of half a century, yet Chinese writers or illustrators have never won one of these awards. However, we believe that China, with its glorious culture and long history and the largest reader-group, will have its own world-class children's writers, illustrators and literary or art images familiar to and loved by children all around the world.

In 1990, China's children's publishers joined the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), and founded the Chinese section of IBBY (CBBY). In 2000, CBBY successfully won the bid to hold the 30th IBBY world congress in China, and this year (2006), there will be more than 800 representatives from all over the world gathering in Macau. This will be an important congress for China's children's publishing to merge into the international mainstream. IBBY is so sacred and beautiful; it is for the children, for the future and for the world; and it possesses so many bright smiling faces of children all around the world. In 2006, the IBBY congress will bring this holiness, beauty and glory to China.

In 2003, in preparation for congress, CBBY launched its website, which introduces CBBY, profiles Chinese children's writers and illustrators, and gives news about Chinese children's publishing. It also links to the website of IBBY and, through this, to the websites of other IBBY national sections. We in CBBY will try our best to gain further support from our government and IBBY, the moral and financial support of society, and the endorsement of the international and domestic mass media. The 30th IBBY congress will be a grand opportunity for the world to know China and for China to communicate with the world and to promote the prosperity of children's publishing in the entire world. It will be the most distinguished and successful congress in the history of IBBY.

The road ahead for China's children's publishing will be as wide as the azure sky, and the future will be as bright as the sunshine.

Submission Guidelines for *Bookbird*

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature is the refereed journal of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

Papers on any topic related to children's literature and of interest to an international audience will be considered for publication. Contributions are invited not only from scholars and critics but also from editors, translators, publishers, librarians, classroom educators and children's book authors and illustrators or anyone working in the field of children's literature. Please try to supply illustrations for your article. (Book covers are sufficient, but other illustrations are also welcome.)

Length: Up to 3000 words

Language: Articles are published in English, but where authors have no translation facilities, we can accept contributions in most major European languages. Please

contact us first if you have a translation problem.

Format: Word for Windows (Mac users please save your document in rich text format – RTF) as an email attachment; send illustrations as JPG attachments.

Style and layout: The author's name and details should appear in the email only, not in the paper itself. More detailed guidelines can be downloaded from www.ibby.org.

Deadline: *Bookbird* is published every quarter, in January, April, July, October. Papers may be submitted at any time, but it is unlikely that your paper, if accepted for publication, would be published for at least six to nine months from the date of submission, to allow time for refereeing and the production process.

Contact details: Please send two copies: one to bookbirdsp@oldtown.ie AND one to bookbirdvc@oldtown.ie

NB: Please put **Bookbird submission** followed by your initials in the subject line.

Please remember to include your full name and contact details (including postal address), together with your professional affiliation and/or a few lines describing your area of work in the body of your email.

Send us a book postcard from your part of the world!

Notices on international children's books, distributed throughout Bookbird, are compiled from sources around the world by Glenna Sloan, who teaches children's literature at Queens College, City University of New York.



Have you got a favourite recently published children's book – a picturebook, story collection, novel or information book – that you think should be known outside its own country? If you know of a book from your own or another country that you feel should be introduced to the IBBY community, please send a short account of it to us at *Bookbird*, and we may publish it.

Send copy (about 150 words), together with full publication details (use 'postcard' reviews in this issue of *Bookbird* as a model) and a scan of the cover image (in JPG format at 300 dpi), to Professor Glenna Sloan (glennasloan@hotmail.com).

We are very happy to receive reviews from non-English-speaking countries – but remember to include an English translation of the title as well as the original title (in transliterated form, where applicable).



- *News of the IBBY congress in Macau,*
- *China; honours for IBBY people; IBBY in*
- *China; 2008 congress call for speakers*

IBBY Congress 2006

In April 2006 the organisers of the 30th IBBY congress, the Chinese Board on Books for Young People (CBBY), announced that for reasons beyond their control the 2006 congress has had to be relocated to the Macau Special Administrative Region in southern China. The Social Communities and the government of Macau are being very supportive, for which CBBY and IBBY are very grateful. They are helping to make this difficult change of venue as smooth and successful as possible.

The professional programme and the majority of the social events remain as planned. Accommodation reservations and special needs have been transferred to Macau and the offer of free transfer from Beijing to Macau for flights booked before the end of May have all been greatly appreciated by everyone.

Colonised by the Portuguese in the 16th century, Macau was the first European settlement in the Far East. Following an agreement signed by China and Portugal in 1987, Macau became the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China at the end of 1999.

Macau has been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and the historic centre of Macau is the product of over 400 years of cultural exchange between the Western world and Chinese civilisation. The architectural heritage, predominantly European in nature together with traditional Chinese architecture, provides many contrasts.

compiled and edited by

ELIZABETH PAGE



*Elizabeth PAGE is IBBY's
administrative director*

The climate is subtropical with pleasant breezes coming off the South China Sea. The congress will take place in the newly built Fisherman's Wharf convention complex. We look forward to greeting IBBY friends and members for what promises to be another rewarding IBBY congress. For current information visit the IBBY and CBBY websites: www.ibby.org or www.cbby.org.

Toin Duijx honoured in Amsterdam



Toin receiving the award from the Lord Mayor of Amsterdam

On Friday, 28 April 2006, Toin Duijx of IBBY Netherlands received the royal decoration of the Knight of the Order Orange-Nassau for his volunteer work for the promotion and study of children's literature. His work for IBBY and the International Youth Library received a special mention. The Order of Orange-Nassau was created by law on 4 April 1892 and is the third highest Dutch order, after the Military William Order and the Order of the Dutch Lion. Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands is the Grand Master of the Order.

New honorary members of IBBY

IBBY is pleased to announce that at the executive committee meeting in Bologna 2006, honorary memberships were awarded to two outstanding contributors to children's literature and reading, Miep Diekmann and Somboon Singkamanen.

IBBY currently has seventeen honorary members. There is a list of all honorary members on the IBBY website (www.ibby.org).

Somboon Singkamanen

Somboon Singkamanen was born on 1 April 1939 in Thailand. This date seems appropriate because of her delightful sense of humour. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok and later studied librarianship at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth.

Somboon was briefly a teacher and librarian in secondary schools, and in 1973, she became a lecturer in children's literature and library science at Srinakharinwirot University, where she remained until her retirement in 1999.

To say that she lectured does not give a good enough picture: she involved her students in many of the projects she began 'on the side', so to speak. One of her students remarked to me once that to take one of



Somboon Singkamanen and Miep Diekmann

Somboon's courses often resulted in a very long-term commitment to children's books, reading and storytelling.

When people lose a beloved parent, sometimes they can hardly cope with their sorrow. Somboon, however, when she lost her mother, thought immediately of a way in which she could make this sad event become a positive force in Thai society. There is a Buddhist custom in Thailand, when someone dies, of presenting a printed booklet to those who come to honour the deceased. In the past, these were usually dry, unillustrated texts, and often went unread. Somboon, however, began the Jataka Pictorial Tales, printing a beautifully illustrated story from the Jatakas (stories concerned with the rebirths of the Buddha). She handed out this lovely book to those coming to honour her mother, and let it be known that she was willing to advise other families wishing to honour a deceased person in the same way. This project has transformed many such memorial services in Thailand, and resulted in lively, well-illustrated children's books of the most interesting of the Jataka tales.

The Portable Library Project, which she founded, received the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award in 1989, and has been an inspiration in a number of countries, where it has been adapted and still functions. Julinda Abu-Nasr of Lebanon was an early admirer of this project, and to this day runs a project modelled in part on the Portable Library Project. Suzanne Mubarak of Egypt was also impressed and before long, there were canvas (instead of wood) versions of such libraries functioning in various parts of Egypt.

It was at the Cambridge (UK) IBBY congress in 1982 that many of us first met Somboon, and we have been enjoying her stories, her experiences, her enthusiasm, ever since. In that same year, she was active in getting the Thai section of IBBY formed, and was its general secretary from

inception until 2000. Although she retired in that year, she has remained active as an advisor to the Ministry of Education. After the tsunami in 2005, she took time to do reading animation workshops to accompany the Portable Library sets that were offered to schools in the tsunami-affected areas of South Thailand.

Somboon has attended several IBBY congresses, and served on the executive committee (1990-1992).

It is for her work in making children's reading a lively and accessible pastime in Thailand and for her extensive influence on other national reading programmes that Somboon Singkamanen richly deserves this IBBY honorary membership.

Anne Pellowski

Miep Diekmann

Miep Diekmann is an honoured and respected figure in the Netherlands. She has devoted her life to books for young people and her role in guiding young authors and illustrators in the Netherlands, as well as elsewhere, cannot be overestimated. Her own books – some 80 titles – have also played an important part in promoting international understanding.

She was born in January 1925 in Assen and as a 9-year-old, at the end of December 1934, she moved with her parents and sister to Curaçao, the largest island in the Netherlands Antilles. The family lived in Curaçao for five years and her life there inspired many of her gripping stories set in the West Indies.

In 1960 she was awarded an Andersen Diploma (the forerunner of the IBBY honour list) for her book *Padu is gek* (The Hague: Leopold, 1957). Later her involvement in the establishment of IBBY in the Netherlands was crucial. The special attention that children's books enjoy in the Netherlands and the success of Dutch IBBY is largely due to her efforts.

IBBY is proud to honour Miep Diekmann by conferring honorary membership on her.

Toin Duijx

Note: A more comprehensive article about the life and work of Miep Diekmann is planned for a future issue of *Bookbird*.

Twenty years of IBBY in China

In Tokyo, in 1986, the executive committee accepted the Children's Publication Working Committee of the China Publishers' Association application to represent the Chinese section of IBBY. The section was formally established in China, as the Chinese Board on Books for Young People (CBBY), founded at a conference held at the Beijing Library on 6 June 1990. Yu Yongzhan, Secretary-General for the State Administration of Press and Publication, and Wu Quanheng, Deputy Chair of the Song Qingling Foundation, attended the founding ceremony. The conference was chaired by Zhou Hongli, Director of the Foreign Affairs Bureau of the State Administration of Press and Publication, and the head of the organising committee of CBBY. The conference adopted the Charter of the Chinese Board on Books for Young People, and elected Yan Wenjing, the prestigious children's writer, as chairman; Liu Gao, Deputy Minister of the State Administration of Press and Publication and Chairman of the Foundation for Young People's Books and Wu Keliang, Deputy Secretary-General of the Song Qingling Foundation as deputy chairmen; Zhou Hongli, Director of the Foreign Affairs Bureau of the State Administration of Press and Publication as Secretary-General; Yang Yongyuan, President of China Publishing House for Young People, and Pan Guoyan, Deputy Director of Books Bureau of the State Administration of Press and Publication as deputy secretaries-general.

In 1997, the State Administration of Press and

Publication decided to move CBBY under the administration of the Working Commission of Children's Books of China (WCCBC), which is affiliated to China Young People Publishing House. The secretariat of CBBY was merged with the WCCBC secretariat. In 1999, Hai Fei, president of China Young People Publishing House and director of WCCBC became the chairman of CBBY.

Today, CBBY comprises 34 Chinese publishers of books for young people throughout China. The current president of the China Publishers Association Mr Yu Youxian is the honorary president of CBBY. Over 200 children's newspapers and magazines as well as many well-known Chinese children's authors are members of CBBY.

Its activities include many reading promotion events and activities around a country that has 367 million young readers. The main office is in Beijing and is coordinated by Ma Weidong and Zhang Jianbin. The 2006 congress will be a showcase for children's literature in China and for the activities of the Chinese Board on Books for Young People.

Keynote Speakers for IBBY Congress 2008 in Copenhagen

The Story in History – History in Stories

Keynote speakers are sought to address such questions as how the children's literature of different countries relates to those countries' history; prehistory, myths, legends, oral storytelling; how the rewriting of official history affects children's literature; cultural heritage and children's literature; living in times of hardship – war, deprivation, suppression, exile; socio-cultural conflicts; political reality and culture; religion; the Holocaust, Apartheid, slavery etc

Please contact Vagn Plenge (vagnpl@get2net.dk) with your ideas and suggestions for speakers and themes.