

IBBY Nomination
Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou

Biographical Information on the Candidate

Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou was born in Kyrenia, Cyprus in 1940 and grew up in nearby Lapithos, both places now under Turkish occupation.

She worked as a teacher for many years at various elementary schools in Cyprus.

She has 25 published books to date for children and teens and was honoured for her literary work by numerous organisations both in Cyprus and Greece.

She has participated in many conferences on children's literature in Greece and she has collaborated with the committee of the Cyprus Teachers' Association (POED) for the children's magazine *Paidiki Hara* as well as with the children's pages of the local newspaper *Phileleftheros* in Cyprus.

In 1991 her name was included on the IBBY Honours List for her book *A Taste of Bitter Orange*.

The Author's Contribution to Literature for Young People

By Kika Pulcheriou

Writer of literature for children and young adults

Former president of the Cyprus Association for Books for Young People

Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou is an important presence in the world of Cyprus literature for young people. Her contribution dates back to 1991 when she published her first book; she continues to communicate with children and young people with love and sensitivity through her writing which offers, at the same time, joy and knowledge.

She draws her themes from the everyday life of children, folklore, history, the national struggles of both Greece and Cyprus, nature, animals and the environment, mutual understanding and cooperation among people.

The main characters in her books are usually children with a wise grandparent alongside them who answers the children's questions with love and who guides them and imparts basic life values. This positive relationship which develops between the grandparents and the children encourages love, appreciation and respect towards the elder members of the family.

Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou visits schools even in the most remote villages of Cyprus not only through her books but also in person since she usually travels there in order to meet the children-readers. She discusses her books with them, she reads to them and excites their imagination by encouraging them to give a different ending to her stories, to write poem or work on other creative exercises that use her books as a starting point. Afterwards, the children post these pieces of creative work to her and they are often published in children's magazines or the children's pages in local newspapers; this gives the children pleasure and joyous feeling of creativity. This is how Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou has built a close and constructive friendship with children of various ages, promoting the love of books and reading but also the spreading of the literary production of Cyprus.

She has, up to date, published 25 books while many others remain unpublished. From the published books, six are historical novels for teenagers and adults. For these historical novels, the writer has received favourable comments from both readers in Cyprus and in Greece. Most have won awards by various organisations and have been described as "literary works of a high standard with excellent structure, a knowledge of main character psychology and a convincing representation of the historical era in which the story unfolds".

Her historical novels leave a legacy, a lasting influence on the literary scene of Cyprus since very few writers have undertaken writing of this genre. Some of her historical books have formed the subject of study among students at the University of Cyprus and samples of her work have been included in the anthologies of Cyprus literature for elementary education.

The writer has been awarded numerous prizes and commendation both in Cyprus and abroad. In 1994 her name was included on the IBBY Honours List for her book *Geusi apo Neratzi (A Taste of Bitter Orange)*.

She is a valued member of her community and as proof of this respect, the community council of Deftera funded the publication of two of her books and distributed copies of the published books to every household within the community as a Christmas gift.

Children of all ages as well as teens and young adults can definitely claim to have a friend in Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou.

Appreciative Essays

Nicosia, 31.1.2006

To Mrs Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou

Nicosia

Dear Anna,

I picked up *Kipros Parousa* that you were kind enough to send to me and read it straight through. It is another excellent piece of work by you, based on the more recent history of Cyprus and especially on the contribution of our country to the Greek wars of liberty, a contribution which, sadly, is unknown to many of us. You deserve to be congratulated for the publication and I extend warm thanks to you for sending it to me. During the next academic term when I will again be teaching the class on “Cyprus Volunteerism” I shall invite you to speak to the students on the books you have written and which deal with this part of our history. During the last academic term I gave to my fourth year students your books on the brothers Georgiade, Iacovos Theodoulou and “Hector” as part of their mandatory assignments. I wish you good health and may your pen continue to move us with powerful stories from the inexhaustible “fountain of Memory” of your Lapithos heritage.

In appreciation,

Petros Papapolyviou

Assistant Professor of Modern Greek History

Cyprus University

Simerini Newspaper – April 30th, 2017

Omorfias Kamomata (The whims of Beauty by Anna Kalogerou-Pavlou)

Review by Chrysosthemis Hadjipanayi

“Educational and prolific writer with prize - winning literary works addressed to both adults and children, she speaks well not only the language of narration but also the language of educator who turns her knowledge and life experiences into effective teaching tools.

Measured and without abusing the personification of flowers and other natural elements, she gives us the “traveller wind” – a representative example of this is the imaginative introduction of her narrative “The language of Flowers” where the lily suggests to the other flowers that they each write their story “so the children can learn to love us, to protect us so we won’t be lost”. But flowers cannot write so they assign the job to the writer herself.

In both these pleasing little books, literally blooming with colourful photographs of flowers seen through the writer’s lens, the focal point of the short stories is the indigenous flowers, mostly wild ones, found in spring and summer. They are flowers of the fields and hills of our country, the beauty of which the writer wants to convey to her beloved friends, the children.

Because she believes that if flowers are the messengers of the happiest seasons of the year, then the children are the innocent, angelic beings that need to study the lessons of the joy of life in nature so that they may become the messengers of respect for the environment, and of love for the natural world we are part of.”

Elliniki Etaireia Christianikon Grammaton

The Greek Company of Christian Letters

Committee Reasoning

The unpublished collection by Ms Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou (from Cyprus) entitled “Oute ena iota” (“Not one I”) consists of 12 historical short stories, most of them about Cyprus of 1974, an island of loss and pain with a history but also a heroic and miraculous land.

All of the short stories are written with compassion and tears, with a strong heart beat and with faith in a better tomorrow. These short stories are real literary works written with vivid imagination and a unity of theme, in simple, flowing language, where tensions reveal the main characters’ finest emotions; short stories emotionally charged which beckon to us to stand with respect before their subject matter – a subject matter drawn from reality and not from the world of the imaginary; facts and situations that are part of the island’s tragic history; real-life stories that “not even one I” is outside the realm of truth. The writer has a clear understanding of her mission.

Ms Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou is truly a short story writer and all twelve of her stories are literary works of high standards.

Athens, November 20, 1989

Nicos Arvanitis

President of the Greek Company of Christian Letters

First Seminar on Cyprus Literature

A Presentation of the book *Gefsi apo Nerantzi (Taste of Bitter Orange)* By Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou

Maria Michaelidou

PhD in Children's and Young Adult Literature

The book is based on the adventurous and devastating life of two brothers, Rodion and Miltiades Georgiades, who, although very young, had already fought three times for the freedom of Greece. The writer fully experienced the amazing life of her two central heroes, managing to enter successfully their very spirit.

She gave us shocking moments by bringing to life the words of the heroes through dialogues and has reconstructed leading events in world history as well as in the history of Greece. She has succeeded in sketching and narrating without extremes. She recounts without describing the brutality of war; she gives us the tragic events and the devastating results of occupation without shocking or torturing the readers with details of the unprecedented violence of Nazism. The writer has skilfully given us a national uplift and a pride as was her original intent.

The entire plot of the book takes place inside a German prison cell in Brandenburg. Despite the small space and the difficult position the two brothers find themselves in, the writer still takes her readers on a journey through different times and places and unfolds the history of modern-day Greece. The heroes' narrative, the dialogues they have, the silent conversations they have with themselves transport the readers back to the two brothers' place of birth, Cyprus, then on to Athens where the family moved so the boys could attend university there; then, it's on to the war from Albania where they fought the Italians; back to German-occupied Greece, to the prison cells of Aegina and back to Germany again where the two brothers are imprisoned. Through their discussions we learn of the tragedy that is the backdrop of the Georgiades family history who sacrifices all of its members in the name of freedom, except for the mother who stoically endures all loss with patience and dignity. The elder brother, Rodion, dies from hardship in prison and the younger, Miltiades is later killed in the Nazi concentration camps while their father and their sister are killed fighting with the Greek Resistance.

The characters of the two heroes are clearly defined through their own thoughts and actions. They are two excellent young men, educated, refined, humanitarians, characterised by their love of country and their fighting spirit; they are both men keen to live an active life, with ideals and moral values. Rodion studied architecture and Miltiades graphic arts. They think about life and love. They worry about their family. Life leaves a bitter taste on their lips.

The novel "Taste of Bitter Orange" is definitely a mature moment in the Writer career of Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou. Here are what I consider the advantages of the author's writing style:

- a) Creating action through narration, dialogue and thought in a space as limited as a prison cell where inactivity reigns

- b) Rodion's conversations with a sparrow which sits at the small window of the prison cell and too which the young man tells everything he doesn't dare tell his brother for fear of upsetting him.
- c) The narrative which moves forwards and backwards through time is a technique reminiscent of the cinema with a variety of angles and co-joining circle
- d) The use of photographs of the narrating hero at the start of each chapter is a publishing innovation

The sharp eye of the author and her psychic intensity succeed in sculpting the historical events and the lives and sacrifice of her two main characters.

May 1, 1995

Dear Anna,

Your novel, entitled *CY 1104*, is truly sensational. Its realism together with its smooth language and excellent organisation of material all contribute to the making of a book which can be read with ease and interest by young and adult readers. With its attention to detail and a solid central axis, the story moves within an acceptable level of ebullition. You may rightly feel proud of your creation.

Warmest congratulations. Please carry on. You can give us more wonderful books such as this one.

Theoklis Kouyialis

Poet

“Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou expresses herself with originality, boldness and exhibits literary talent.”

Maria Michaelidou

PhD Literature for

Children and Young People

“Sensitisation of children to values and principles that lead to adopting a positive and optimistic outlook on life is primarily what Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou aims to develop through her books.”

Costas Katsonis

Philologist – Scholar

PhD Literature for Children and Young People

“The short stories by Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou are noteworthy literary works written with imagination. The author is a mature story-teller”

Nicos Arvanitis

President of the Greek Company of Christian Letters

“The heroes in Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou’s historical novels have the “Required Artistic Persuasiveness” – that is, they are credible, deeply moving and conveyors of high moral values.”

Eraclis Kallergis

Professor, University of Patra, Greece

Critic of Historical Literature

“The books by Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou, collectively as well as separately, are a hymn of praise to the homeland and its heroes, known or unknown, and a tribute to ordinary people.”

Lemonia Hadjopoulou

Reader

Didimoticho, Greece

To Mrs Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou

Kato Deftera, Cyprus

It is with pleasure that we announce the unanimous decision of the members/associates of the Greek Cultural Agency of South Africa to award to you a commendation for your literary prose writing to date, which has rightfully placed you among those whose faithfully serve Greek letters.

Your most recent novel *Perdika mou ploumisti* (*Adored partridge*) places you alongside the top writers of Cypriot letters.

Yours sincerely,

Dolly Dolka

Manager

The Cultural Agency of Johannesburg,

South Africa

4 April 2005

From all the children of the elementary school of Psevdas to Mrs. Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou with love,

Thank you for coming to our school to talk with us and to present some of your book to us.

We wish you good health so that you may continue to write nice books.

With our all love,

The pupils of the elementary school of Psevdas

(Cyprus)

First Primary School of Avgorou

Tel. 23922140 (Cyprus)

Dear Mrs. Anna,

We were very happy to receive your story. We were so excited to read about Tsin-Tsin and the other sparrows and we decided to continue your story. Our class is made up of four smaller groups so each group gave your story a different ending which we then acted out. We're sending you all the endings we came up with as well as photos from the play-acting.

We would like to thank you and we hope you will visit our school again!

With love,

The pupils of class E2 and their teacher, Maria Michael

Awards and other Distinctions

1. *Tote pou Kinigousa ta Tzitzikia*
(*When I Chased Cicadas*)
First Prize, Cyprus Board on Books for Young People, Nicosia 1985
2. *Ai Yorgi Kavallari*
(*Saint George Rider*)
First Prize, Cyprus Board on Books for Young People, Nicosia 1991
3. *Perdika mou Ploumisti*
(*Adorned Partridge*)
First Prize, Cyprus Board on Books for Young People, Nicosia 1999
4. *Imetha Ellines*
(*We are Greek*)
First Prize, Union of Cyprus Writers, Nicosia 1995
5. *Kypros Parousa*
(*Cyprus is Present*)
First Prize, Union of Cyprus Writers, Nicosia 1997
6. *Monadikes Istories*
(*Unique Stories*)
Cyprus National Award (for published work), Nicosia 1997
7. *Oikogeniaki Ipothesi*
(*A Family Affair*)
First Prize, Philologists of Karditsa, Greece 1986
8. *Oute ena Iota*
(*Not even an i*)
First Prize, The Greek Company of Christian Letters, Greece 1989
9. *Dio Parateres Kaltse*
(*Two Mismatched Socks*)
Award by the Greek Circle of Children's Books (for published work), Greece 2003
10. *Kapio Mati mas Kita*
(*An Eye is Watching us*)
Commendation by the Non-Profit Literary Organisation of Johannesburg, South Africa 2008
11. Commendation for overall Contribution to Literature by the Non-Profit Literary Organisation of Johannesburg, South Africa 2017

12. *Agapes kai Trelles sta Thrania*
(*Love and frolicking at the desks*)
First Prize by the Non-Profit Literary Organisation of Johannesburg, South Africa
1990
13. *Omorfia's Kamomata, Meros A & B*
(*The Whims of Beauty, Parts A & B*)
Commendation by the Greek Cultural Association of Cypriots in Greece 2014
14. *Kypros Parousa*
(*Cyprus is Present*)
Commendation, Book of the Year by the Greek Cultural Association of Cypriots in
Greece 2014

Ten Books Written by Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou

1. *Geusi Apo Neratzi*
(*A Taste of Bitter Orange*)
Novel for older children
Self-published, Nicosia 1998
2. *Monadikes Istories*
(*Unique Stories*)
Short stories for children
Self-published, second reprint, Nicosia 2002
3. *Perdika mou Ploumisti*
(*Adorned Partridge*)
Novel
Published by the Coop Bank of Deftera, Nicosia 2002
Reprinted by Parga Publication under the title *To Moiraio Noumero (The Fated Number)*
4. *Tote pou Kinigousa ta Tzitzikia*
(*When I Chased Cicadas*)
Short stories
Self-published, Nicosia 2002
5. *Kokkini Telia*
(*Red Dot*)
Novel for teens
Published by Power Publishing Ltd, Nicosia 2004
6. *30 000 podia pano apo tin gi i zoi mou oli*
(*30 000 feet above the Earth is my whole life*)
Novel for teens
Published by Power Publishing Ltd, Nicosia 2004
7. *Himerines Diakopes kai to Louloudi*
(*Winter Vacation and the Flower*)
Novel for children
Self-published, Nicosia 2005
8. *Hartinos Pirgos*
(*Paper Tower*)
Novel for children
Self-published, second reprint, Nicosia 2006

9. *Me lene Poupou*
(*My name is Poupou*)
Published by Elias Epifaniou, Nicosia 2008

10. *Xipolita Hnaria*
(*Bare Footprints*)
Novel for children
Published by En Typois Publishing, Nicosia 2011

Five Books Submitted to the Jury

1. *O Tsin-Tsin kai o Billy Bo s' ena taxidi pragmatiko*
(*Tsin-Tsin and Billy Bo go on a real journey*)
(based on Andersen's journey to Greece)
Self-published, Nicosia 2002
2. *Enas alliotikos kathreftis*
(*A different kind of mirror*)
Folk tales
Self-published, Nicosia 2002
3. *Agapi kai trelles sta thrania*
(*Love and frolicking at the desks*)
Novel
Published by Elias Epifaniou, Nicosia 2007
4. *Kapio mati mas kita*
(*An eye is watching is us*)
Short stories
Published by Elias Epifaniou, Nicosia 2007
5. *Omorfias kamomata (meros B)*
(*The whims of beauty (part B)*)
Short and long stories
Published by The Community Council of Deftera, Nicosia 2009

Book Summaries

O Tsin-Tsin kai o Billy Bo s' ena taxidi pragmatiko

(Tsin-Tsin and Billy Bo go on a real journey)

On a ship bound for Greece, a sparrow named Tsin-Tsin is travelling alongside Andersen; its dream is to see the world, the way it heard it described at Kikitsa's school. During the journey, a nightingale falls onto the deck, too exhausted to fly, and Andersen rescues it. Its name is Billy Bo. Billy Bo confides in Tsin-Tsin in order to find out "what a good man does in his life". Both birds decide to continue together and, through their eyes, we witness Andersen's journey in Greece – a journey filled with wonders and wonderful experiences which Andersen used to enrich his fairytales.

Enas alliotikos kathreftis

(A different kind of mirror)

A collection of local fairy-tales born of the wisdom of our people. It's like looking through a different kind of mirror and seeing the communities of old with both their good and bad qualities. Christina listens to these stories; some please her, some upset her, like those that talk about oppressed women. She discusses those with her granny and grandad and comes away with correct messages and attitudes. Some stories are embroidered with a sense of humour, sometimes silly, sometimes mad, that always appeals to children.

Agapi kai trelles sta thrania

(Love and frolicking at the desks)

The pupils of Year 6 of elementary school are worrying about who will be their teacher this year. But they needn't have worried; sunshine fills the classroom in the form of their new teacher. She's pleasant and knows how to handle all behaviour including frolicking at the desks. How wonderful the school year will turn out to be is summed up in the very last chapter which is written by one of the girls of the class.

Kapio mati mas kita

(An eye is watching us)

A book of short stories for older children and young adults that deal with topics of interest: school, society, the national problem of Cyprus and the mosaic of world peace. Some of these stories are humorous where the topic allows.

Omorfias kamomata (meros B)

The whims of beauty (part B)

This is a book that concerns itself with the environment and its wild flowers. Short, imaginative stories, poems, riddles praise the beauty found in Nature alongside scientific elements whose central message is the protection of the environment.

(This book was published by the Community Council of the village of Deftera and distributed among the community members as a Christmas gift.)

Book Extracts

From the book *A different kind of mirror* (folk tales, p. 31–33, 97–98)

From Pillar to Pillar, Comfort

“Grandpa, are you sitting down again? And why is it that every time you sit down on a chair you say ‘Oh, how nice’?”

“Christina, I see you notice everything. But you’re perhaps too young to understand the meaning.”

“Well... once upon a time, in a war that happened in a fairy-tale, because you should know that people always made wars, even in fairy-tales, anyway, in this war, they caught a soldier from the enemy camp. There was a feast to celebrate the victory, it was held in the big room of the palace, a room with pillars on the way around. There were many tables laid out and all the warriors were eating and drinking and celebrating their victory. And their king ordered the captured soldier to be brought into the room and tied to a pillar so he could watch the feast. Such was his punishment! At one point, the prisoner asked the guards: ‘Could you please move me to a different pillar every hour and tie me up there? That way I’ll be able to get a better look at all of you. From where I am right now I can only see the faces of a few people and the rest is all from the back’.

The guards thought this a reasonable request and they said: ‘Alright, have it your way’. So every hour they would untie the prisoner, move him to the next pillar and tie him up again.

When the feast was over, the king asked the prisoner:

‘Did you really want to change pillars so you could have a better look at us all?’

‘No, your majesty. I only did it so I could change places.’

‘I don’t understand, what difference does it make which pillar you’re tied to? You’re still tied up!’

‘That’s true. But going from one pillar to the next meant being free for a while.’

The king couldn’t help but admire the young man. He understood how important it is to be free and granted the young soldier his freedom. And, ever since then, my dear girl, we have the saying ‘from pillar to pillar, comfort’.

“But Grandpa, you’re not a prisoner!”

“Oh, yes, I am, my girl. I am a prisoner of old age.”

That same evening I removed the bamboo rocking chair that I kept in my room and put it out on the veranda. It had been a gift from my godmother and I had kept it in my room, covered in red and pink flowery cushions. I said I didn’t want it in my room anymore, I didn’t have space for it. But I only did it so my grandfather could have another ‘pillar’, another ‘comfort’, one more breath of ‘freedom’!

My Age

The following day, in class, I told the children one of my grandfather's stories but, instead of the wicked witch, it had a black woman in it as a symbol of wickedness and deceit. On the classroom blackboard we had written:

No to racism

Black, yellow, white

Same people

On the same Earth

The teacher's comments, similar to those of my grandfather and grandmother:

"Those kinds of stories do not please us. But we will keep them alive because, through them, we see how people lived and behaved in societies of yesterday. Fairy-tales are mirrors of our life, a way of life that is in danger of disappearing – if it hasn't already disappeared. A way of life that may be good or bad."

And I give my own continuation to my teacher's philosophical analysis:

The princes and the beautiful princesses, the good fairies, punishing evil, laughter, joy, those are elements of a good life. The bad side of life is, well, it's everything I've ever discussed with my grandparents, everything which I've ever written and you've already read.

I don't remember if I've told you what class I'm in. But what am I saying... I should have said what age I am. I'm the same age as each one of you who has read these stories.

From the book *The Whims of Beauty (Part B)* (p. 94–103)

A long conversation on knowledge (The Red Book)

“Granny, don’t tell anyone about our little paradise.”

“Why not?”

“But if everyone finds out about it, it’ll be a big disaster. Everyone will pass by and will be tempted, especially by the wild narcissi. A hand is bound to reach out and cut the beautiful flowers. So they will be lost, won’t they?”

“Hm... you’re right. But beautiful things are there for everyone to enjoy. You shouldn’t keep them hidden in order to protect them. It’s people who should change and learn to love...”

“But that’s exactly why they cut the flowers! They love them and want to put them in a vase so they can look at them.”

“They need to learn to love and respect. Respect Nature, given to them by the Creator. They should learn to live in harmony.”

“But until that happens, it’s goodbye beautiful narcissi.”

“‘There is no time to be pessimistic.’ Isn’t that what we learnt from the documentary about the Earth that we watched yesterday because it was World Environment Day? We should all try.”

“And how is that going to happen, Granny?”

“I have an idea! I’ll put it all in a book so it can reach the hands (and the eyes) of everyone in the village so they can read and learn. Because, as you know, destruction is the result of ignorance, not malice. When you don’t know any better, you make mistakes, often destructive and irreparable.”

“I don’t believe that, Granny. How can people destroy the environment and you think it’s simply because they don’t know any better?”

“Let me give you an example. Do you believe that I would be capable of harming Nature?”

“Ha, ha! Granny, you can’t even hurt a butterfly! You just look at Nature and melt with admiration and love, how could you possibly harm Nature? You’re kidding me.”

“Even so, Anna dear, when I was your age, do you know what my friends and I used to do?”

“In Lapithos?”

“Yes, in Lapithos. It was back in the days when we first started decorating Christmas trees. That was a custom that came to us from abroad and drove us all crazy. Everyone in the neighbourhood wanted a Christmas tree. So we would take some axes and climb up the mountainside. Above our community, Saint Minas, there was a small forest of young pine trees. We would choose the nicest ones and chop them down. For a week the pine trees would decorate the hall of our homes. A few years later, that forest was gone.”

“And nobody stopped you?”

“Nobody. No parent, no teacher, no priest. Everybody was guilty, out of ignorance.”

“I can’t believe you did something like that, Granny.”

“That was a crime, that’s how I see it now. But back then, everyone did that because we didn’t know better. It took many years and much destruction before people became sensitive to such issues and before laws were made. The more I think about it, the more convinced I become that it’s all of matter of education. People should be taught things.”

“And what are you thinking of doing now, Granny?”

“Everything we’ve both learnt all this time that we’ve been watching our little paradise I’ll write down in a book. So it can reach the hands and the hearts of people. And they’ll also learn about the Red Book.”

“Red Book? What’s that?”

“Haven’t I told you about it? It’s a book of all the flowers and plants that have disappeared from our planet and of others that are in danger of extinction. These books are being written all over Europe.”

“Granny, let’s write this book, I’ll give you my piggy bank.”

“Baby, we will definitely need a piggy bank but it won’t be a child’s one. We’ll find a way to make our dream come true.”

And the way was found...

The publication of this book was funded by the Community Council of Deftera and the Co-op Bank of Deftera-Anaya.

It turns out that when those in charge show the... beautiful side of their face, they become worthy of praise.

Thank you,

Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou

Little Anna’s Request, a request by any small child:

If you happen to come across a little paradise on one of your walks, please remember not to cut any flowers (those with bulbs) that are protected by law. Use your mind and your heart, let the beauty of Nature make its mark on you. Protect the flowers so that they may be there for you, for your children, forever.

From the book *Tsin-tsin and Billy Bo go on a real journey* (p. 124–126)

Hans Christian Andersen: A world hero

“Once there was a boy who liked to dream. He sang the sad song of the death of the good king of Denmark, Frederick, and wanted to be like him. But a mere mortal can never be a king. As he grew older he learnt more about the world. And he changed his dreams. He would become an entertainer, he would sing and dance and amuse people. But then again... how many people would he be able to please in this way? (Not to mention the fact that he wasn't very good at it) And that when he decided to make... heroes! He travelled places, learnt things, met people. He read books and learnt even more. And he made up heroes, using his mind and his heart. And then armed with a pen, he put these made-up heroes into paper ships and set sail straight into people's hearts. Children laughed, grown-ups pondered, old men were glad and truths came to life and brought relief.

The Ugly Duckling brought joy to the child's aching heart, the Nightingale sang to the despairing Emperor and gave him the will to live again; the Sparrow scattered rose petals on dreams, Wild Geese brought justice through patience and persistence; the Little Match Girl planted charity in the barren hearts of people. And there were also some lifeless heroes, objects that became heroes like the Emperor's New Clothes and brought laughter even to the most unsmiling man. And as for the bodkin... But I can't list all the heroes who travelled in these paper ships between yesterday and today, between today and tomorrow, between tomorrow and forever for as long as there are hearts beating – especially children's hearts.

My dears, I'm sure you know who I'm talking about: Hans Christian Andersen, the international storyteller who didn't hesitate in... sacrificing his Little Mermaid in order to spread love to the whole world.”

This was my mum's article for the magazine “World Heroes”. You're probably wondering which two lines of writing are mine. You won't find them no matter how hard you look because they never made it into the article. Mum's ideas were exactly the same as all of mine.

From the book *Love and frolicking at the desks* (p. 147–150)

Concluding

The hot summer has settled on the earth and it's an added joy that schools are now closed. But I keep turning over in my mind everything that happened during the school year that has left its mark on my life. I still haven't told you about the most important part so bear with me a little longer and read on. And you, too, will understand what I want to say to all the teachers who... "are loved by the children..."

God's Eye

We were at the end of the school year. For days on end, we were thinking what gift we should get for our teacher. We would agree on one thing and then we would disagree and call off the deal – until we decided that we should each get our own separate gift for her. I wanted to end this special year with a special gift. And then I remembered what our teacher had done for the children of Anemochori; in order to tell them how much she loved them, she wrote a story for them. So I decided I, too, would write a story and give it to my teacher as a gift. Maybe then she'll understand how much I love her. It's been inside my head since last Sunday when we were returning from a trip to Larnaca and we were travelling against the sun; my dad said "Do you see God's eye?" But I'd better explain:

In the West, clouds were stirring like crazy, pushing and shoving each other. Suddenly they stopped and were quiet. An enormous eye with puffy eyelids and huge eyelashes that stretched straight out and stabbed the frayed cotton of the clouds appeared in the sky. The clouds and the rays of the sun made up the eye of God and they said to him:

"Look at what's going on down below on the earth. How can you permit this?"

"There's nothing going on. People are settling down for the night they've turned on their lights and they are going home."

(This is how far my dad and I thought of this story. From this point on, the story is mine, all mine).

"Yes it's the hour of... Kindness," said the clouds.

"People get tired doing bad things all day so now it's time for them to rest. God sees them at night-time. And when God's eye closes again the next morning because the sun-light is too bright then they start again. I feel guilty," said the Sun "for closing God's eye. I was thinking of asking God to allow me not to rise into the sky." The sun fell quiet, the clouds were silent, and God's eye kept looking down at the earth, searching. Suddenly his gaze found what it was searching for. And in his loud voice he said "Just looking at the children of Class 6 of the elementary school of Stenoporia and their teacher makes it

worthwhile to look down at the earth. Sun, continue your journey. As long as there's even one place on earth like Stenoporia, you will continue to shine your light upon this earth!"

For Mrs Argyro, my teacher,

loved by all of us.

Stephanie

From the book *An Eye is Watching Us* (p. 142–149)

But Collins didn't die

(Historical Short Story)

1914 – Christmas this year falls on a Friday. It's almost Christmas.

Europe is wearing its festive best. Europe, a place of barbed wire and no man's land. War is for those who parade their youth in the trenches. Just for them, may they all be well. But why shouldn't everyone else celebrate? Besides, they've sent their gifts to the soldiers. Woollen sweaters, chocolate, cigarettes. Their debt is done. Even their queen, the queen of England, has sent greeting cards: "May God keep you safe and return you to us in good health."

On the west front of Belgium and Northern France, the Germans and the British are facing each other. They are separated by a no man's land of varying width, wider in places, narrow in others. In some places the distance is so short, the soldiers can hear what the enemy is saying, mostly swear/words and such. They can even see each other's face, wild and sharp, craving revenge. "The enemy killed Mike yesterday, right before our eyes. How I long to kill a hundred of them for him, or even the whole of Germany!" mutter the British through gritted teeth. These kids are here for only three weeks, that's what they were told when they were packed off for the war front. It's now been two months but the war is still raging, this war is endless.

The landscape sends shivers down your spine, in your heart. A thick layer of snow has wiped out borders and enemy lines, the whole world is one, peaceful and patient. It awaits the Birth. It's entitled to it. It has been redeemed.

The poplars with their thin sensitive branches are festooned with snowy decorations. It's an evening of anticipation, it's Christmas Eve. Collins is sitting by himself in the corner of the trench. He is a blond boy from Scotland. He's a boy, just a seventeen-year old boy. And Collins used to love people! He used to go sit with an old, lonely neighbour back home to keep him company and then he was happy that he would be fighting for Peace – that's what he had been told. But kill for Peace? That was different. But Freedom and Peace demand sacrifices they said. Sacrifice means leaving your warm bed, saying goodbye to the sad eyes of your grandparents, sacrifice is leaving a warm cup of milk at breakfast, the fruit, the eyes of the girls, sacrifice is leaving behind a rosebud, just opening up at dawn, similar to a parent's smile, Sacrifice is allowing yourself to accept this mission without complaining. That's how Collins felt about all these sacrifices.

Collins is sitting by himself in the corner of the trench.

Everyone in the trenches is moody and pensive tonight. But aren't they always? Tonight, though, everyone's mind is travelling back in time, dreaming of a past, happy life. Wonderful Christmases, full of love and warmth. And now... Not a single wish. Not a single song. It's ironic, really. Everything was so beautiful back home. "For three weeks" they said. Yet here we are, sinking in mud, surrounded by such a beautiful landscape. "If

only Christ could be born here tonight...” Collins thinks. “If only He could be born in our hearts.”

“Silent Night, Holy Night...”

God, it can actually be heard! Breaths come out laboured, eyes grow wide with wonder but it’s actually happening. This wonderful sound is coming from the trench across the way, from behind enemy lines. And as the hymn ends Collins begins to clap; slowly-slowly others begin to clap until the clapping can be heard at the enemy trenches. And then – silence. It feels like an eternity. And Collins dares to start singing another Christmas song and, one by one, everyone joins in the singing until the song ends and then clapping is heard once more. There is peace, peace is born, Christ is born in everyone’s heart. The guns were put aside, no orders, no commands. A few heads peeped out and then, slowly, shyly the first men stepped out of the trenches, followed by more and more men, they walked towards enemy lines. Everyone. Oh God, what happened tonight at the trenches! Christ was born, He was born in thousands of hearts, covered in gun powder soot, hostile. British and German soldiers embraced and kissed each other and exchanged mementos, buttons for keepsakes, uniforms, photographs. And everyone said how much they hate war. There was Peace. People made Peace, people themselves, not the issuing of military commands and the unfolding of military parchments.

And Collins? Next morning he was first out of the trench. From the opposite trench, behind enemy lines, another soldier stepped out. Both boys took out their cigarettes. Collins lit his and reached out to the light the other soldier’s cigarette. But his hand stopped mid-gesture, the lighter fell to the ground, his eyes froze, full of question marks and he dropped onto the snow, his blood forming a red heart around him.

On that day, December 26, 1914 in no man’s land near the West front, on the border of Belgium and France, Collins was killed. But Collins didn’t die. He was the spirit of Christmas.

But Collins didn’t die

(Part 2)

Who will tell Collins that the friend he was smoking with, never managed to light up his own cigarette? He didn’t betray Collins, he didn’t kill him. Someone else shot both of them, a sniper. The other soldiers had become friends, they were even planning on playing a friendly game of football. The British sent a rider to town to bring a ball. They formed two teams. Good God, what a match that was! Who was against who? Some had on enemy uniforms and it’s a wonder how they knew who was on a which team, who to pass the ball to, which way to shoot and score goals. They kicked and scored and even called penalties... and they turned it into a normal game with a score of 4-1 in favour of the British. This wasn’t the same as the singing on Christmas Eve. If choirs were to win, the German choir would have won, it definitely sounded better.

They buried Collins and Hans. There was a Scottish and German priest; they shared the funerary service and lowered the two boys into the grave. Now for sure Collins will feel that Hans wasn't the one who had hurt him; he'll understand...

Christmas of 1914 is when they killed Collins. But Collins didn't die. He was the spirit of Christmas. He was the spirit of World Peace.

(Based on real-life events as recounted by live witnesses on London's BBC)

Book Translation

I glossa ton zoon (The Language of Animals)

A modern-day ecological fairy tale by Anna Kalogirou-Pavlou

(Theopress Printers, April 2002)

A long, long time ago, all the animals that lived together with Man held a yearly meeting in a clearing in the forest. It was something like a fair. They had stories and jokes and pranks to share. They would sing and dance at the melodies of the cicada's guitar; nightingales sang, swallows, turtledoves, birds of all kinds, all frogs and bugs and dogs and donkeys gathered.

What a good time they had!

Cheerful and happy.

They had no sorrows.

But in years to come, sorrow did come into their lives.

Gradually, friends and fellow fair-goers became fewer and fewer.

"How did we get to be like this? I don't even feel like singing," said the cicada. "I don't think I'm ever coming to this fair again."

In a crumbling house just outside the big city, the few remaining animals would now gather. They were all sad and in low spirits. They would drag their paws and wings as far as the house but, instead of singing and having fun, they would mumble and complain.

"What happened to our fun-filled parties, how did the laughter turn into tears, where did our joy go, what's happening to us?"

And the memories brought tears and they would part in sadness until the following year when they would meet once more. That summer there was some very bad news at the meeting in the crumbling house: the sparrows were dying on the rooftops and in the yards, the frogs were dying in the ponds, the bees were dying in the beehives. "What's wrong?" the animals wondered. And the wise owl who could see in the dark, gave an explanation after much thought.

"My brothers, Man has an invisible gun in his hands and he will ruin us with it."

"An invisible gun? And how can we protect ourselves against an enemy we cannot see?" asked the frightened animals. "What does he do with this gun?"

"He sprays the trees, the weeds, the flowers. He says it's to protect them from disease and bugs and caterpillars that destroy crops and vegetation. But along with the bugs and the caterpillars, *we* are also in danger. Because Man also sprays the fields, the ditches, the riverbanks, and that's where we eat and drink from. Without knowing it, we are putting poison into our bodies."

“We will perish, we will perish...”

“There’s only one thing left for us to do. We must get as far away from here as possible. Let’s all go to the clearing in the forest!”

“The clearing...to the clearing!”

“But it’s so far away, my legs can barely carry me.”

“My wings can barely carry me.”

“There are so few of us left...”

“We must get away! Come on, let’s go!”

So off they went: bees, butterflies, ladybugs, scarabs, lizards, swallows, nightingales, doves, wasps... On their way they even found a young fox all by itself, crying the loss of its mother. The long procession of animals kept growing – birds, reptiles, insects, cats, dogs, ants, mice, all determined to survive. In a kingdom of their own. Soon, the clearing in the forest at the end of the world was filled with animals. But they were all so sad.

In time, they forgot the past, they had children, built a new life that was good and happy like before. Away from humans. And they set guards along the roads to watch in case humans appeared. They didn’t want them around anymore.

They considered the dog to be the best guard because its bark was loud and quickly spread the news. But they decided to station the snake as the look-out. And so, the kingdom of Man was separated from the kingdom of the Animals. The animals were never going to live with humans, ever again.

The animals were happy in their kingdom. The people lived happily in theirs – or so they thought.

The travelling wind who heard everything, heard strange things from the kingdom of Man. The farmers were desperately shouting: “Where’s a cat to save me from the mice? Or a snake even!”

And you may be wondering where the mice came from... well, on the day when all the animals decided to leave for the clearing in the forest, a female mouse was having babies in her nest and stayed behind...

The travelling wind also saw Mr. Meletis, the teacher who was pulling out his hair in despair. “Ah, where’s a bee, an ant, so I can show these children and teach them about hard work and diligence?”

Lola, the singer who always sang off-key was singing in the music school: “Where’s a nightingale to help me find the right key? I can’t find the right key!”

And the workers and the labourers were looking for a donkey to show them what patience is. But worse off were the story-tellers because they couldn’t tell stories without animals in them...

Outside a hospital window, the travelling wind turned down its buzzing so it could hear better. And what did it hear!

“Mister Philon, your little girl can only recover from depression if she has a companion.”

“But she has her friend Sappho.”

“No, not that kind of companion. An animal companion is what I mean. One that receives our love, multiplies it and gives it back to us. A puppy, a kitten...”

The father was inconsolable. “Where will I find a puppy or a kitten, oh I wish I could find one... but I’ll find one, I will!”

And he stood up on a hill looking at the various roads he could follow. The wind was upset by this and let the tears it was bringing from the sea fall on the kingdom of men. And then it said: “I’m going to help this man find an animal. It took a deep breath, filled up its cheeks with air and in a minute it was up on that hill. It wrapped Mr. Philon in its breezy waves and took him far, far away.

And the wind said to him: “From this point on, you’ll travel alone. I can’t go any further, I need to get back. It’s almost daybreak and I must return to the sea to bring a cool breeze to the new day.”

It took Mr. Philon a long while to recover from the dizziness he felt. He looked around him and was amazed to see a pile of nuts and a pot of water. The wind had collected them as it passed through towns and villages and large forests. Mr. Philon filled his pockets with nuts, took the pot of water and set off. But at the crossroads, which path was he meant to follow? He placed his hand over his heart and began to cry. He cried and cried and felt like he would never stop, but suddenly he saw that all four paths had merged into one and that was the path he would now take. He happily walked on and on through dry fields without a trace of vegetation. Nothing would grow now because people had been spraying the weeds with strong poisons, good and bad. The earth was dry with huge craters ready to swallow you up. And the horizon was distant and foggy.

In the hollow trunk of a tree, Mr. Philon sat down to rest from the long walk and the burning sun. It was still cool in there from the humidity of the night. Suddenly he felt the ground vibrate, the crawling of a reptile. A huge snake had come to the tree to escape the heat of the day. Wasting no time, Mr. Philon grabbed the snake by the neck and started to squeeze.

“Please,” the snake gasped. “Let me go, I won’t hurt you!”

“No way, I remember your ancestor who was rescued by man, given warmth and shelter, and as soon as he recovered, he attacked the very hand that saved him!”

“But that’s just a fairy-tale!”

“So is this one. We’re in a fairy-tale, too.”

“Yes, but this is a modern fairy-tale. We shouldn’t let the past cloud our judgement. Those are old ideas, long gone. Snakes aren’t as bad as some may think. Come, let me go and I’ll grant you a great gift.”

“What gift are you talking about?”

“The gift of understanding the language of animals.”

“And what good will that do me? It’s a useless gift. For one thing, there are no animals around, so where exactly will I be able to use this gift of yours?”

“I’ll take you to them. I know where they are.”

“Really?”

Philon decided to trust the snake and started following it. They kept going while the sun still shed its light on the world. But there was no sign of the kingdom of the animals. Nothing. Suddenly he felt something stirring inside him, a strange feeling, and he heard a voice coming to him.

“How easy it was to fool him! I’ve been leading him for hours in the opposite direction and he is simply following me without realising we’re heading away from the kingdom of the animals. No way would I let him reach our land. I managed to get Adam and Eve thrown out of Paradise, would I let this man into our kingdom?”

How did the snake actually forget the gift he had given to this man – the ability to understand the language of the animals...

Philon pretended to be exhausted.

“Enough,” he said. “Stop. I can’t take any more. I’m stopping right here, I don’t care about the animals and their kingdom. Thank you for trying to help me.”

And, dragging his feet with his head hung low, he started on the road that would take him back home. Inside, though, he was very pleased. The snake was very pleased, too, because it knew that only a person who loved animals could ever hear their voice – this man was mean. He didn’t love animals, he fought them by spraying trees and vegetables with pesticides.

Purry the cat had told them the story: the neighbour, Mr. Agapios, had given Purry’s great-great-grandmother a fish fillet to take to her kittens – how wonderful, it had no bones! She had grabbed it and had happily taken it her kittens and then...she ended up all alone because the fish had been sprinkled with poison.

“Didn’t something similar happen to the dog who was supposedly man’s best friend and guard? So I’m glad my gift wasn’t wasted on you. I spared both myself and the animal kingdom from man.”

Philon was now well on his way in the opposite direction, heading towards the east. Barren fields lay all around. He walked on and on looking straight ahead. Forty days and forty nights he walked, until just up ahead he came to the end of the world, and to the kingdom of the animals. What wonderful sounds he could hear! Tweeting and trilling and chirping and warbling, buzzing, humming, crawling...

“Woof, woof!” An enormous dog leapt up ready to tear him to pieces. Philon jumped back just before the dog attacked. But the moment the dog saw this man, something inside him instantly softened. He felt the need to give love and to receive love. He stopped barking and backed away.

“What is this man doing here?” the dog wondered. “Why would he make this trip all the way out here? Wouldn’t it be great if he wanted to be our friend again... a chain, all of us: plants, animals, man. But he has been so selfish, thinking only of himself. More fruit, more vegetables for him, no weeds in the fields and in the ditches... selfish and greedy. No, I won’t let him cross the border and come into our land.”

Mr. Philon started crying, shocked by what he heard – the gift the snake had given him was working.

The dog saw Mr. Philon on his knees and felt sorry for him – a man down on his knees was surely a sign of regret for what he had done, the dog knew that from his ancestors that had lived alongside men for so many years, back in the days when people and animals lived side by side. And tears, tears were also a sign that a man was sorry.

“So let him sit there, without food for forty days and then I’ll let him through,” the dog thought.

And the man, Mr. Philon, stayed there, without a bite to eat for forty days. Luckily the dog didn’t say “hungry *and* thirsty” so Mr. Philon took sips of water from his pot and was able to hang on until the dog let him enter. But when the gate was opened and all the animals stood in a long line to welcome him with music and dancing, Mr. Philon stood firmly in his place. He now knew he had to help other people. If he entered the kingdom of the animals, what would happen to all the teachers, the musicians, the workers? What would become of the sick children? He had to go back while he still had the energy.

As he was walking away he could hear the animals’ mixed comments: “what a shame he is leaving... it’s better that he’s gone... he might destroy everything we’ve got and then we’ll have no way of saving ourselves... if only he could love us the right way, then the Earth would be paradise...” And the birds along with the cicada sang a song:

Billy billy bo
This is our song
La la la
In this land
People, animals together
Never separated, never.

Philon sang the last line all the way home. “Never separated, never,” he sang happily and didn’t even stop to rest until he was back in the land of people. With torn clothes and hole-ridden shoes he was still singing:

If you love animals,

You hear their voice,
If you love animals,
Their company you will enjoy.

This was the song of man. Philon travelled the whole world, making sure everyone heard his song. Then he set off once again for the kingdom of the animals. Year after year a person with a good heart finds his way past the border of the kingdom of the animals and soon, in the years to come, people and animals will live together again in harmony, side by side in a happy land, on planet Earth. Because animals can forgive people for their mistakes.

Would you like to know about Chaido, the sick little girl?

I'll let you work that out for yourselves. I'm sending you my love from the kingdom of the animals. Oh, yes, I'm also sending you *their* love!