

Feast or Famine? Food and Children's Literature

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EDITORIAL

'... where he found his dinner waiting for him ... and it was still hot'. So ends Max's adventure in *Where the Wild Things Are*. Nor is he the only one to arrive home safely to the comfort of food. Both Rosie in *Rosie's Walk* and Mr Gumpy after his day out are back in time for tea. Food is an essential element throughout children's literature, whether it is toast with Mr Tumnus, the Famous Five enjoying ginger beer and fruit cake or, more recently, the inhabitants of Redwall tucking into meadowsweet pie. What better theme than food for a conference on children's literature?

In November delegates were welcomed to the 20th annual IBBY UK/NCRCL MA one-day conference Feast or Famine: Food and Children's Literature. It proved to be a delicious day full of delights that included cake and a visit from Judith Kerr with *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*, now celebrating its 40th anniversary.

It is customary for this edition of IBBYLink to give our readers a taste of the autumn conference. This is mainly through the abstracts sent by the presenters. However, we are grateful to those who have sent more extended texts. For those who would like to experience the banquet in full, the proceedings will be published in the autumn by Cambridge Scholars Publishing – something that has been appreciated in the past.

The conference opened with a paper from Jean Webb looking at the way food can – and does – reflect cultural and social attitudes to childhood and how children are seen within a society. Her light-hearted headings for the sections of the talk set the tone for the rest of the day in which delegates explored ideas of body image, looked at

the paradoxical nature of food and its preparation in children's literature with Nicki Humble and were entertained by author and chef Guo Yue's flute, combining the pleasures of the table with the joy of music. The day closed with the artist David Lucas talking about his work, in particular his latest picture book, *Grendel: A Cautionary Tale about Chocolate*. Throughout, the proceedings were interspersed with readings of food-related poems from her anthology, *A Picnic of Poems*, by Ann Harvey.

The plenary sessions were only part of the meal. The parallel sessions are a key element of the IBBY UK/NCRCL MA conferences. This was no exception. Here delegates were able to sample a wide range of dishes. There were papers on food, its symbolism, use and importance in literature ranging from the nineteenth century, the post-war novels by Noel Streatfeild to the Deepwoods series by Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell. Presenters looked at subjects as diverse as starvation, politics and education – but all were approached through the way their chosen texts used food and its provision as a means to serve up their message.

Those who attended certainly left satisfied. I hope that the 'bonnes bouches' presented here will provide members with a taste of the whole, perhaps encouraging further exploration of a subject that is fascinating, while whetting the appetite for next year's conference. Don't forget to have a look at the newly designed IBBY UK website (www.ibby.org.uk) where you can find photographs of the conference.

Ferelith Hordon

Childhood Three Ways: Constructions of Childhood through Food in Children's Literature

Jean Webb

A current approach taken by chefs on contemporary British television cookery competitions, such as *MasterChef* and *The Great British Menu*, is to produce a dish by cooking the central ingredient three ways, such as rabbit three ways, or, as my vegetarian ex-husband said the other week, 'Cheese sandwich three ways!' Such an approach to preparing a dish calls for creativity and interpretation of the focal ingredient, resulting in a dish that reflects the interests of the chef and demonstrates his/her skills. The dish will also be related to and influenced by particular cultural and philosophical influences and also, I would suggest, matters of class and economy.

An Irish chef might well take pork and cook it three ways using locally and responsibly sourced ingredients, since pork has been widely produced in Ireland for centuries and is a central component of Irish cuisine. The Irish chef might well serve the three-ways pork dish with champ, a distinctively Northern Irish dish of creamy mashed potatoes and spring onions.

However, if the chef was from Eire it would be a similar side dish to champ but called colcannon and include regional variations such as kale or ham. Ingredients and the dishes created by chefs and cooks can therefore be seen to be related to national identity.

Although very likely delicious, the pork dish would be unacceptable to Jewish diners or those who follow the Islamic faith for matters of religious law, as the pig is regarded as unclean. Moreover, a vegetarian would obviously neither cook nor eat the dish, whilst an omnivorous diner may be concerned as to whether the ingredients were ecologically produced and from local organic sustainable sources and that the pig had been well treated. Furthermore, whether the breed of pig was a traditional breed and had been reared outdoors in more natural conditions might well be factors of consideration associated with particular philosophical views. Food can therefore be readily associated with cultural and philosophical perspectives that lie behind the seemingly uncomplicated matter of a dish for consumption.

Social class also comes into the kitchen and the dining experience. Tom Kerridge, an English chef of renown who now has his own television series, owns and runs the only pub that has two Michelin stars attributed to the quality of the food. The accolade of the Michelin star is normally associated with the higher ranks of fine dining in restaurants as opposed to the public house. Kerridge's determination is to produce dishes associated with the genre of pub food that is affordable and notionally attractive to certain class sectors of society, as opposed to expensive and exclusive fine dining experiences. One of the determining differences between the pub and the fine dining experience is that of the presentation of the food, the nuances of construction. Kerridge is also intent upon saying that no food is restricted by class boundaries. Furthermore, he often adds a gendered slant to his dishes by describing them as 'man food', i.e. substantial and satisfying, suggesting that the dish is suitable to sustain the active male engaging in physically demanding activities. In fact the phrase 'man food' has been added to the publicity material for his latest cook book.

By this time you might well be wondering how does all this foodie discussion – and I may confess obsession – relate to children's literature. During the course of this article I wish to demonstrate how there are close associations between how the chef chooses, uses and prepares food, and the ways in which authors construct and portray childhood, employing food as a mode of representing philosophical perspectives, and notions of class and gender. This article is divided into three sections: 'Hearty Meals to Build a Nation', 'Of Bygone Dishes' and 'Quirky Recipes: Deconstructed Banoffee Pie'.

Hearty Meals to Build a Nation

Michelle J. Smith's fascinating study *Empire in British Girls' Literature and Culture: Imperial Girls, 1880–1915* discusses how 'girls were shaped by, and were imagined as shaping, the British Empire' (Smith, 2011: 1) and 'also situates these girls' texts in the contexts of discourses of the period about femininity, education, and race' (p.1). Smith draws particular attention to the work of Bessie Marchant (1862–1941) who wrote adventure stories featuring girls, earning herself the title of 'The Girl's Henty'. Marchant wrote over 130 novels that featured girl heroines. The stories were set across the British Empire in isolated locations, although Marchant herself never left England. They are therefore creations of the imagination that embed British values of colonialism. Marchant's heroines are intrepid, practical and, whilst being adventurers, are also homemakers. They represent the essential support to the adventuring colonial male who would, it was hoped, secure land and riches, thus contributing to the power of the Empire.

The text I am going to discuss is Marchant's *Waifs of Woollamoo* (1938), which is set in Australia around the time of the 1851 Gold Rush by implication, for no dates are given in the novel. The household is that of the bachelor Captain Brandreth who has taken in three children for different reasons. Meg, the eldest girl, is his niece, her mother having been housekeeper for the Captain and then later died. Lionel is the orphaned son of one of the Captain's ex-crew, whilst Dot, the youngest, was taken in by the Captain on being orphaned, rather than being sent to an orphanage. The three children make up a family and call themselves 'the waifs and strays'.

The Captain is charitable and kind, yet does not always make the most sensible decisions. Although he creates a family for these children on his small farm, he loses his money through speculation and throws them into the jeopardy of destitution. When the Captain decides to leave to speculate for gold, the responsibility of looking after the household falls to Meg. Meg is central to the novel in that she is the source of stability, responsibility and sound decision making. In contrast, the adults are unreliable, make poor decisions and leave their children to fend for themselves. Paradoxically, the actions of the adults are those that epitomise the adventuring spirit and attitudes that drove the development of colonialism and the Empire through financial speculation and seeking to make wealth from the land that they were colonising. The community of the family grows with children from neighbouring families who also go to the goldfields. Prior to his leaving, the Captain regales the children with tales of the great fortunes to be made on the goldfields where gold can be found by chance, waiting to be plucked from the streams and undergrowth. He communicates the sense of adventure when he says that one of the reasons for going is to prevent himself from 'being caught in a rut' (p.19). The reaction of the children a little later when the Captain has ridden off without a backward glance is to take his sudden decision making as part of the behaviour of adults to be smiled at rather than condemned. They have a wisdom beyond that of the adults, saying that he was 'bitten by the speculation-bug' and that 'People of his age are often taken like that' (p.21).

The values of the domestic community centred on the Captain's farm and particularly in the children represent the positive attributes of colonial settlers who will make a successful life in the new land and such values and attributes are focused and magnified in Meg. She represents the essentials of domestic stability and reliability symbolised in the emphasis given to food in terms of preparation and adaptability, particularly when she takes over from the Captain as full-time housekeeper and cook, which duties she had previously carried out only during the school holidays. Meg assumes her responsibilities with a clear sense of responsibility and is described as 'taking command' (p.25). All the children contribute. Dot, the youngest of the original three, feeds the poultry and livestock, whilst Meg milks the cows. There is the sense of the involvement in food at each stage, from husbandry and hunting to cooking and

enjoying the feast. The importance of the kitchen and food, often described as 'abundant and appetising' (p.17), as being at the centre of the household is marked by the mention of the stove providing both comfort, heat and the means of cooking. Whilst proficient at bread making, Meg also learns how to cook a wild pig that has been causing mayhem on the farm of the neighbours who have brought their young children to the Captain's place and left their eldest son Jack in charge of the homestead. Interestingly, there is a fulsome description of the damage done by the wild pig, which would be informative for the child reader in the safety of the English countryside where pigs would be confined to stys. The wild pig has tunnelled under the wire fencing, slain six sheep and killed a sheep dog. Jack's decision is to hunt down the wild pig. On his way he meets Meg and the others by chance, who are about the business of the farm. Throughout, there are inclusions of the work of producing food such as milking, taking the milk to the creamery, carting fodder for the animals, etc., all the requirements that go into the production of the provisions from which they produce their meals in an environment where there are no shops. This is engagement with food through all the processes from beast and field to the table. Emphasis is also given to the fact that they work up good appetites and satisfy them with simply cooked foods, such as bread and fried eggs, as in the case of Jack on the way to his pig hunt.

Whereas the adventure for the adults is in hunting gold, adventure for the children is in the danger and success of hunting the pig for protection of their livestock and the ensuing roast-pig feast they enjoy. However, having achieved the tricky business of killing the pig, achieved by Cicely, they then discuss what should be done with the carcass. Again processes are gone through in the ensuing conversation. Jack thinks it will be too tough and too strong, a statement counteracted by Cicely, who reminds him of their school history books that told them that boar's ham was considered a 'luxury in medieval times' (p.81). She then thinks through what they will have to do, knowing that they will have to 'get that beast cut up and the hams smoked properly' (p.81). Raised in an essential self-sufficient manner, these children are aware of the procedures required to produce meat, whereas most child readers of the period and now would not. She knows that the creamery owners will do it for them as 'they always smoke our bacon when we kill a pig' (p.81). Dot joins the conversation, emphasising the history and pageantry associated with roasting a boar, declaring that they have

got to have the boar's head. ... For truth to tell 'tis a lordly dish, and in its jaws we'll put the biggest lemon. Oh, we'll take the head to Woollamoo, and we'll have a great feast to celebrate our victory' (p.81).

Jack responds to Dot's eulogy in a somewhat dampening way, stating that 'Boar hunting is no place for girls' (p.82), which is countered by Lionel reminding him of Cicely's part in achieving the kill. Marchant is thus placing girls at the centre of the action and demonstrating that they are equally able to provide, even in dangerous circumstances. The following feast is one enjoyed by all, after they have taken account of the size of the animal and how they can provide for the future by salting and preserving the meat. Again they are knowledgeable about where they can obtain the saltpetre for pickling, how to do so and how to prepare the pickling vats. Food therefore is used by Marchant to emphasise equality and capability against the prejudice ingrained in the older boy. The scene also demonstrates the responsibility of the children and their awareness in having to plan for the future, which again is in direct contrast to the behaviour of the adults.

When the Captain and the other parents do return from the goldfields they are sick, half starved, have been robbed of all they gleaned and are in a worse situation than before. It is the children who save the situation, for Meg has been astute in her management of the farm and the livestock, having developed the cow herd and raised horses, resulting in a lucrative sale.

Marchant's waifs are of the stuff of Empire builders and colonialists, for they can survive without adult support and provide for their otherwise unfortunate elders. At the centre of such achievements are young girls proving that heroism does not have to be on the battlefield but can be on the domestic front.

Of Bygone Dishes

I wish to turn now to my second construction of childhood 'Of Bygone Dishes' as my discussion circulates about food as a subject in historical fiction, namely Kevin Crossley-Holland's *The Seeing Stone* (2000), which is the first of his Arthurian trilogy. Crossley-Holland is a medieval scholar as well as an award-winning children's author. His story of Arthur is deeply informed by his scholarship and gives a vivid depiction of medieval life, including the part food played in the medieval community. The novel is a combination of social history and the fantasy of the legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. The boy Arthur, the focal character in the text, is the son of the Lord of the Manor, a manor frequented by Merlin who gives him a piece of obsidian. In the obsidian, Arthur sees the playing out of the life and legend of King Arthur and, through this insight into another world, contemplates his own life, his future and the part he will play. For much of the novel Arthur is wondering whether he is *the* King Arthur and whether this is his future. In the obsidian, Arthur holds present, past and potential future; what the reader holds in the text is a vivid insight into medieval life with birth, death, sickness, joy, sorrow and feasting. Crossley-Holland brings together sickness and imminent death with joy derived from food in presence of a pigeon pie. Baby Luke is very ill. He is the youngest member of the Lord of the Manor's household and his sickness carries with it the memory of the loss of another baby a year earlier when no medicines would work and the child wasted away. Almost painfully, Crossley-Holland includes a scene of joy through food, set against this dark scenario, emphasising as Merlin says to Arthur 'that everything contains its opposite' (p.23). After the long night of suffering and sadness, to cheer them up, the cook serves 'a surprising pie' for dinner:

The pastry was shaped like a dovecot, and there was a feather sticking out of the top of it. ... Well, when my father cut open the crust, there was a great commotion inside the pie. My mother and Sian squealed and stood up. Then a pink-eyed pigeon poked out its head and flapped its wings. We were all showered with bits of crust, and the pigeon flew up into the gallery. Everyone clapped,' and then the real pie was carried in. (p.23)

This moment of playfulness is some relief from the misery. Live birds and animals encased in pastry were a feature of medieval cuisine in wealthier families. As Melitta Weiss Adamson in *Food in Medieval Times* notes:

English cooks in particular liked to make towers and castles out of dough. ... But more than buildings it was animals that inspired imitation dishes in the Middle Ages. (p.74)

These dishes, such as the one described by Crossley-Holland, variously included live birds, giving rise to the 'four and twenty blackbirds' of nursery rhyme fame. As well as the live bird pie, *The Seeing Stone* also includes information about medieval foods that are known today. For example, when Arthur tells of Slim, one of the characters, who brings

over a large covered dish from the side table, and planted it in front of my father. 'Herbolace!' he announces (p.65).

Then my father lifted the dish lid, and helped himself to a large dollop of scrambled eggs and cheese and herbs, while Slim brought over another dish,

which I shall tell you about in just a moment.

Herbolace was the precursor of the omelette, being a mixture of eggs and shredded herbs, baked in a buttered dish. Over the centuries it became more elaborate, being finished with grated cheese and sometimes flavoured with ginger – imitating a French dish of the same name. The other dish was that of collops, which was a dish of slices of meat. Although the derivation is obscure, the Oxford English Dictionary indicates that it may be related to the old Swedish word kollops, but also suggests a German origin (klops), both of which would reflect the cultural influences on medieval England. Originally the meat would have been venison, but then the term was more widely applied to any meat. Crossley-Holland is opening up the opportunity for the reader to learn of the diverse origins of dishes and how they are linked linguistically with the component influences that shaped the British nation. Matters of national identity are embedded here, and also the interchange possible through cooking and foodstuffs travelling across nations. Which leads to Crossley-Holland subtly incorporating a deeper political argument through a conversation about exotic foods between father and son.

Exotic foods of the period would very well be surprising if described as such today. At the meal of herbolace, Arthur's father is speaking of the relationship between King Richard and Saladin to point out to Arthur that those on opposite sides in a bitter religious war could still respect each other; for when Saladin heard that Richard had been ill:

Saladin sent King Richard pomegranates and grapes, lemons, cucumbers: rare fruits almost as costly as jewels. (p.67)

All the foods nominated here are common and unexceptional today. Interestingly, the pomegranate, originally a native of Persia is now recognised as a fruit with valuable health-bearing properties as it contains compounds that benefit the reduction of blood pressure and can help to reduce cancerous conditions, besides being an ingredient that is favoured by contemporary chefs – especially Nigella Lawson – to add to salads and other dishes.

What Arthur learns through these incidents associated with food is that there is respect and generosity beyond the differences that lead to bloody war and division; that food is a way of coming together in some understanding. This is also the position for the reader, and has resonance and pertinence today with the divisions between East and West; between Islamic extremists and Western culture; and between right-wing activists and intolerance for immigrants. Through the inclusion and subject of food, Crossley-Holland thus introduces complex ideas for contemplation, ways of thinking that will shape future attitudes and approaches to life. In *The Seeing Stone* there are a number of other associations to be made through the subject of food, such as recipes and the need for the cook to balance flavours; the contamination of foods in medieval times owing to the lack of refrigeration, and how foodstuffs can be used both medicinally and for enchantment; the methods employed to catch and prepare meats; and how traditional games such as apple dipping can be a simple source of fun and enjoyment. However, the final way I wish to discuss how Crossley-Holland uses food concerns morality and the law.

Whilst the better off sectors of medieval society enjoyed a diet that fulfilled their needs beyond the basic requirements, others at the bottom of the social scale were not so fortunate and could be living on the edge of starvation when harvests were poor and their access to hunting foraging and forestry rights were limited by the law. Hum, one such serf, is accused of stealing a leg of mutton from the manor kitchen. Arthur attends the manor court where Hum is tried. Crossley-Holland thus gives insights into how important food was and the regulations surrounding access. Under usual circumstances Hum's offence would be punished by hanging, however Arthur's father is well respected by the official of the court and so leniency is given and Hum's punishment is to have his right hand cut off. Leniency seems an inappropriate term in one way, for

the lack of hygiene and medical knowledge will result and does so in the wound becoming gangrenous and Hum suffering a painful and prolonged death. In medieval times, life was precariously balanced against the workings of nature in ways that are, for some of the world's population, not a matter of either concern or awareness. The organisation and actions of society in relation to the essentials of life could either give or take, could decide between either life or death.

Arthur, the child in *The Seeing Stone* is placed as an observer. As the novel progresses and he matures, he is more directly placed in the events of society, those kinds of happening that he has watched in his piece of obsidian, his 'seeing stone'. The seeing stone itself is a piece formed by ice and fire in the formation of the very world we inhabit. It has a mirrored surface like glass. In it Arthur is reflected as he watches. Through the novel, Crossley-Holland invites and enables the reader as an observer, as a thinker, to connect past, present and future. He uses food as a means of making connections through the known to the unknown and thus encompasses subjects that are deeply rooted in the substance of the construction of society. Crossley-Holland's construction of childhood is that of the child as a thinker, a learner, and a potential activist to make a better and more tolerant future.

Quirky Recipes: Deconstructed Banoffee Pie

My third and final construction of childhood is 'Quirky Recipes: Deconstructed Banoffee Pie', which is a rather more playful consideration of the role of the chef and cooking in two texts for younger readers: Peter Bently and Chris Harrison's *Monster Chef* (2012) in the Vampire School series and *Chef Shocker* (2006) by Sue Mongredien and Teresa Murfin in the Frightful Families series. Both play on the current popularity of cheffie cookery series and competitions on television such as *Masterchef* in three versions, *The Great British Bake-Off* and Nigel Slater's *A Taste of My Life*.

Monster Chef is about a school cookery competition. The plot is unoriginal in that it is about the good hero child and the cheating villain who compete in the competition, the villain being defeated. What is original is that the school is one for young vampires. The playfulness in the text is linguistic, circulating around the names of dishes and associations with the world of television chefdom. The free meal offered as the prize for the winner is a meal in 'The Fat Bat', which is an allusion to Heston Blumenthal's world-class restaurant 'The Fat Duck', which has been awarded three Michelin stars and the accolades of the Best Restaurant in the World and the Best Restaurant in the UK. The other quirky element of this text is the punning on the names of dishes, such as 'Coq au Fang', making them desirable for vampires.

Chef Shocker tells the story of young Amy, whose parents own a somewhat unusual restaurant, not in terms of the clientele, but the food served, which is bizarre. Ingredients are oddly combined and turned into grotesque dishes. Amy's school has been invited to join in a television programme called *Life Swap*, again playing on a contemporary UK programme, where Amy's parents take over the school kitchen and the school cook runs their restaurant. The cook produces traditional dishes in the restaurant and the parents continue with their bizarre concoctions, including serving snail stew. Matters are happily resolved when the parents rein in their eccentricities and produce a more normal and edible menu.

The reason why I have decided to talk about these two texts is that they raise an awareness of food for the child reader and they are amusing. The fun comes from playfulness with language and also knowing the parodying of the foodie world portrayed on television and beyond. Here are texts that call for an awareness outside the texts themselves in order to understand and enjoy the humour. The child reader also has to either have an understanding of food and UK food culture, or be introduced to that by someone who does. The school cook in *Chef Shocker* also cooks healthy food for the most part, with only one inclusion of chips. So there are links to be made with

nutritious healthy eating as opposed to junk foods, whilst also placing the school cook as the heroine. There is an implied association here with the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's 2009 campaign for healthy school food, food education and appetising school dinners, which has had a considerable impact in raising public awareness to the problems of poor nutrition and diet provided by school meals.

By this point you may be wondering of the relevance of deconstructed Banoffee Pie. For those of you who are yet to be initiated into the wonders of Banoffee Pie, it is a dessert comprised of a pastry or biscuit-crumb shell filled with caramel made from condensed milk and topped with sliced bananas and whipped cream: an indulgent and sweet delight. I had a deconstructed Banoffee Pie at a fine-dining restaurant and found it a somewhat confusing scattering on the plate. I did not realise then that the idea of deconstructed dishes is for the diner to be reintroduced to the delights of foods with which they may have become overly familiar and habituated, by separating components to be viewed and tasted afresh and then to reassemble the dish in the mouth. One could view this as culinary as opposed to literary 'ostranemie' or 'defamiliarisation'. In similar ways, this is what literary criticism is intent on doing: to re-view the familiar, to re-understand and to become exposed and immersed in new experiences and understandings. It is, as it were, the old making the new, which is what literature for children also does. Authors, i.e. 'the old', construct childhoods and children employing philosophical, nationalist, culture, class and gendered parameters, and the literary critic and academic reads, tastes and digests – exactly what you are all about to engage in during this day's conference dedicated to the subject of food. In conclusion I am sure that the day's delights will be, in the words of Tom Kerridge 'proper lush'!

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Liniment Cake, Beavers and Buttered Eggs: Children Cooking and Cooking [for] Children

Nicki Humble

Food, as we all know, is obdurately, disproportionately present in children's literature. What is perhaps less immediately evident is how often descriptions of *cooking* occur in children's fiction. From *Little Women* to Pippi Longstocking, scenes of food preparation are richly significant moments in many texts. In this article I consider a few such moments, and look also at the ways in which cookbooks and food memoirs engage with the notion of children and cooking.

One of my early reading memories is of a passage in Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* where Susan discusses methods of cooking eggs with a farmer's wife. Their exchange stayed with me for years. Why was this so memorable? What are the

particular effects and pleasures of accounts of cooking? And what might these textual moments have to tell us about the oddly over-determined presence of food in children's literature?

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries scenes of children cooking are a particularly iconic feature of North American children's literature. Culinary skills were seen as a crucial element of a child's education. Cooking was understood as an essential skill and familial duty is seen most clearly in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House series, In every book the reader is given extended descriptions of the cooking, baking and preserving undertaken by Ma and the girls, who make cheese and pickles, bread and pies, with the children helping with the simpler tasks and learning by watching. Laura Ingalls Wilder's books are driven by remembered hunger, whether in the descriptions of abundance in *Farmer Boy* or the descriptions of rare treats her parents manage to provide.

The food that is cooked in the American children's texts of this period falls almost invariably into the treat or luxury category. Baking taking on a particularly significant role with the assumption that a girl should, by the age of 11, be already a skilled cake maker, and that much social cachet rests on her abilities. Failure produces an element of comedy. Scenes of calamitous cooking are among the most enjoyable and memorable in children's literature.

But the *pleasure* is in the lingering over failure. Why should culinary failure be more appealing than success? Is there, perhaps, a suggestion that cooking and food preparation is also seen as play?

In British children's literature in the early years of the twentieth century, particularly after the First World War, we find a situation of unstable domestic labour transmuted into representations of children at war with cooks, and in the new licence for children to be seen entering the kitchen and even cooking themselves; the results evoking both delight and disgust, both elements of a feature in memories of food.

Food is never only one thing. If it has the potential for freedom and creativity, it is also horrific. Children's picture books are one of the first places where the realities of the connections between death and eating are broached, but these books also lay bare a profound cultural confusion around these issues.

It is in scenes of cooking and food preparation that some of the key paradoxes of our cultural understanding of food can be played out. Food as a gift, as friendship, as love; food as death. The recipe can be regarded as social order, civilisation; but also as disguise and palliative. Food is always paradoxical – both absolutely ordinary yet also strange and fugitive. The scenes of cooking in children's texts play around the margins of these paradoxes; they extend the object status of food a bit longer – holding off the moment of consumption, destruction, incorporation. But they also acknowledge – and often glory in – the process, the creation, the mess.

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Eating My Words

Anne Harvey

I felt very privileged to be invited to the IBBY UK/NCRCL academic study day at Roehampton University and to provide some poetry on the subject of food in between the talks.

I decided that the link between writing and poetry needed a title, so I chose the overall title 'Eating My Words'. The idea sprang from a poem by one of my favourite writers, Vernon Scannell. I read his 'Poem on Bread' as an introduction.

Poem on Bread

The poet is about to write a poem;
He does not use a pencil or a pen.
He dips his long thin finger into jam
Or something savoury preferred by men.
This poet does not choose to write on paper;
He takes a single slice of well-baked bread
And with his jam or marmite nibbed forefinger
He writes his verses down on that instead.
His poem is fairly short as all the best are.
When he has finished it he hopes that you
Or someone else – your brother, friend or sister –
Will read and find it marvellous and true.
If you can't read, then eat; it tastes quite good.
If you do neither, all that I can say
Is he who needs no poetry or bread
Is really in a devilish bad way.

I followed this with poems about breakfast time, poems on toast and porridge by Peggy Dunstan, and Russell Hoban's 'Egg Thoughts'.

Last in this group was the famous and unforgettable 'The King's Breakfast' by A.A. Milne. I still know it by heart.

Preparing for the conference made me turn back to the anthology on food that I edited for the publisher Blackie, almost 25 years ago. It was called *A Picnic of Poetry* (1988), and I took poems from that book and also from another anthology published by Random House *The Naughtiest Children I Know* (2000). One of those children was from Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, the story of Augustus who would not eat his soup. In case you have forgotten: Augustus got thinner and thinner and 'On the fifth day he was dead'!

This was followed by another Milne poem, 'Rice Pudding', the sad tale of Mary Jane who wouldn't eat her rice pudding, though the grown-ups thought it was delicious! Milne doesn't explain what happened to her.

Among many other poems on likes and dislikes was one by my late friend, the actor David King (famous as Badger in productions of *Toad of Toad Hall*). For my anthology he drew on his own pet childhood dislike, and wrote 'I Hate Greens'. Delegates at the conference joined in the chorus of 'I Hate Greens' as lustily as any junior school class!

Not all the choices I made were amusing or light hearted. I included Laurie Lee's beautiful, lyrical 'Apples'. He once told me that if he had a penny for every time that poem was spoken or anthologised, he would be a very rich man.

And I included an anonymous poem, translated by Chris Searle, on the delights of the mango – heart of Africa.

As a trustee of Eleanor Farjeon's Estate, and having just taken part in this year's Eleanor Farjeon award (which went to David Almond, a good food surname), I *had* to

read one of her poems. Her poem about a greedy girl called Griselda was probably really about herself. It is known that she loved her food. Finally, after warnings about weight and spots, Griselda suffered from a very bad tummy ache, but, as the poem, concluded:

'Some people are greedy. Leave it at that!'

And then we all dispersed to greedily sample Judith Kerr's delicious birthday cake, a poem in itself!

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'Pearls and Pomegranates Cannot Buy It': Food and the Treachery of the Capitalist Marketplace in Oscar Wilde's Fairy Stories

Aoife Byrne

Along with other authors of Victorian Children's literature, such as Christina Rossetti, Catherine Sinclair and Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde is preoccupied with the materiality of food in demonstrating the inequality of the capitalist system. Wilde's fairy stories utilise images of food in order to provide a salient critique of the fraudulence of the capitalist marketplace. Food as a motif runs throughout both his fairy tale collections, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), in which he juxtaposes images of the opulent foods of the inactive ruling classes with the 'faces pinched with famine' of the common man. This article analyses Wilde's representations of over-indulgence, starvation and the authoritarian withholding of food, in order to demonstrate how he translates his critique of inter-class struggles to a children's literary market. I explore the ways in which the original illustrations interact with the text in the visual depictions of food, plenty and wanting. As well as this, this article interprets tales from both Wilde's collections, as a warning against the abject poverty and starvation engendered by the injustices of the dominant capitalist system of accumulation. This article utilises Wilde's essay 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' (1891) to elucidate Wilde's engagement with contemporary discourses surrounding socialism, as well as the ways in which Wilde vocalises this engagement in his fairy stories.

Wilde's essay explicitly attacks the ways in which the ruling classes of his contemporary cultural context thrive financially at the expense of the subaltern lower classes. In his essay, Wilde's use of food as a motif through which he critiques this inequality is perhaps most explicit where he asserts that the capitalist despot profits by ensuring the common man subsists only on 'scanty unwholesome food'. He attacks the ways in which private property has destroyed Individualism through its emphasis on the accumulation of property as inextricably linked to the value of the person. Wilde offers a rationale for socialism, where private property and thus crime would be abolished, degrading authorities and despotisms would be unnecessary and Individualism would finally be allowed to flourish. The fairy stories attempt to highlight Wilde's concerns about the unjust nature of the society that was meted out to him. The tales 'The Devoted Friend' and 'The Happy Prince' admonish societies that are structured around accumulation for the rich and exploitation of the poor, while 'The Selfish Giant' offers a more optimistic worldview in its deconstruction of capitalism and its vices in favour of a socialist commune.

This article reads Wilde's fairy stories as expressive of Wilde's Socialist concerns. 'The Happy Prince', for instance, tells the tale of the late Prince whose persona has been reanimated in the statue raised to his memory. The Happy Prince, along with his right-hand man, the Swallow, is so distraught at the poverty and starvation of the city that he does all in his power to try help his suffering people. However, Wilde's embedded message is that while the Prince's attempts to help the starving poor are genuine, the Prince tries to alleviate their suffering in a method that serves only to prolong the inequities of the system. Wilde juxtaposes starvation and opulence in order to cast a disparaging eye on the inequality of the capitalist marketplace, as well as the laissez-faire governments of the Victorian era that are unintentionally and wilfully ignorant to the needs of the common man.

Similarly, in the tale 'The Devoted Friend', Wilde tells of an exploitative relationship between Little Hans and his supposedly devoted friend, Big Hugh the Miller. Wilde uses the motif of food to illustrate injustices embedded in the economic policies of his contemporaries. The Miller, both literally and symbolically, takes the fruits of Little Hans' labour without giving anything in return, and thus allows the latter to come to a very real privation, which leads to his untimely death. Despite Little Hans' supposed popularity, the Miller is completely unchallenged for his hand in his death and is allowed to retain his position as a hypocritical despot. Wilde again uses food to articulate the monstrosity of this injustice:

'Little Hans is certainly a great loss to everyone,' said the Blacksmith, when the funeral was over, and they were all seated comfortably in the inn, drinking spiced wine and eating sweet cakes.

The lavish spiced wine and sweet cakes of the ruling classes, when contrasted with Little Hans' wanting for even the most basic food is Wilde's representation of capitalist vices at their most immoral.

Wilde's use of food to critique social inequality runs throughout his fairy stories. However, Wilde places a particular emphasis on the pomegranate, which tends to signify opulence, social standing, access to exotic markets and membership of the exclusive ruling classes. In 'The Nightingale and the Rose', for example, Wilde contrasts love and money as opposing concepts in terms of philosophical meaningfulness, implying that since love cannot be quantified under the system of accumulation, it is philosophically sound, while the capitalist system is void of deeper meaning:

Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the marketplace. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.

Wilde's juxtaposition of pomegranates with gold and precious stones designates to the exotic fruits a rich and ethereal quality that aligns them with the exclusive and authoritarian ruling classes and, moreover, the vapidness and totalitarianism he implies that they embody. Indeed, Wilde continually uses the pomegranate as a warning against excess at the expense of the starving proletariat.

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Women, Work and Chocolate: Food, Power and 'Sites of Struggle' in the Post-War Novels of Noel Streatfeild

Kay Waddilove

A descendant of the Fry's chocolate dynasty¹ (and the great-great-granddaughter of prison reformer and ur-feminist Elizabeth Fry), Noel Streatfeild wrote some of her most noteworthy children's books in the post-war austerity period of the mid-1940s to the

mid-1950s. During this decade food became a catalyst for societal concerns about cultural and political change in the wake of the Second World War, and a factor in the ensuing socio-economic developments that were to be both reactionary and revolutionary in their effect. Food was, in both senses, on everybody's lips. In the train journey at the beginning of *Curtain Up*, 'the sight of real egg and chocolate biscuits, both at the same minute, excited the other passengers so much that in no time they were talking like old friends' (Streatfeild, 1944: 11).

As wartime acquiescence in civilian sacrifice was being replaced by post-war discontent, the position of women in society and, particularly, in the family, had become the subject of intense debate. Food rationing became even more stringent than it had been during the war, and providing for, obtaining, preparing, consuming and celebrating the basic human need for food acquired a significance far beyond mere sustenance.

Food in human society, and story, has always, of course, from Eve and the apple onwards, held mythic as well as physiological meaning, and first I explore how food is interpreted as a marker of crucial events in the development of the protagonists in Streatfeild's stories. I then examine how it becomes a signifier for contemporary tensions in the family dynamic with regard to power, resistance and the role of women, both inside and outside the home. I discuss three novels that demonstrate the rapid social changes then in process – *Curtain Up* (1944), *The Painted Garden* (1949) and *White Boots* (1951) – in order to show how their representation of food reveals the complex interface between personal and public responsibilities for women (as well as men and children) in a decade of change that still has resonance for today.

¹ Denied access to universities and public service careers until the nineteenth century, the dissenting Quakers became prominent in manufacturing businesses and medicine. The Frys were followed by the Cadbury and the Rowntree families – the 'trinity' of Quaker chocolate.

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Dog Meat for Dinner: Food in Heroic-Era Antarctic Narratives for Children

Sinéad Moriarty

The narrative of Robert F. Scott and the 1910–1912 'race to the Pole' dominates writing about Antarctica for both adults and children. It is used as an example of heroism, courage and camaraderie. It is also, essentially, the story of five men slowly starving to death. The stories about the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration written for children are forced to face the harsh reality that many of the men who went to the continent at the turn of the century suffered from starvation to various degrees, and that the dogs in these stories were eventually a source of food for the hungry explorers. In Michael Smith's 2003 story *Tom Crean: Ice Man*, the brutality of the situation is starkly depicted for the child reader:

The dogs themselves were also a valuable source of meat for the men. So it was decided to put them out of their misery and shoot them. Even Tom's last puppy couldn't be saved. Tough men like Tom were in tears. But there was simply no choice. Only the strongest can survive a Polar expedition. (p.77)

My presentation examined how food and starvation are depicted in contemporary rewritings of the Heroic-Era narratives for children.

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The Island that Provides: Food Supply and Sustenance in Victorian Robinsonades for Children and Young Adults

Simone Herrmann

In nineteenth-century Robinsonades, those stories that imitate the structure of their eponym Robinson Crusoe (1719), the dilemma of shipwreck and ensuing struggles for survival inevitably raise the issue of food as the basic means to life. Two concepts of the isolated habitat emerge within the genre: the 'insula amoena', the friendly island, and the 'insula inimica', the hostile island.

Using the two examples of Captain Frederick Marryat's *Masterman Ready* (1841), dealing with a pious family who are shipwrecked on an isolated island and are delivered by the even more pious old seaman Ready, and R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), the story of the boys Jack Martin, Ralph Rover and Peterkin Gay who are shipwrecked but find that this lonely island is the mythical 'land of plenty', this article investigates aspects of Victorian Robinsonades:

- 1 Their tendencies of presenting the island setting as highly life friendly;
- 2 The power relations that arise through the giving and denying of food;
- 3 The motif of cannibalism;
- 4 The narratological function of food.

In both novels, food poses an extreme lure for the youthful protagonists. This issue might be seen as a product of Victorian and Puritan regulation of children's diet (Labbe, 2009: 93), which found in the adventure stories of the period space for imagination and indulgence as rebellion against these obligations. The tranquil islands of *Masterman Ready* and *The Coral Island* hence provide the characters with everything they need, but, furthermore, even enable a life in abundance and thus acquire Edenic traits. However, the didactic aspect of children's overindulgence is also included in these novels. Particularly in the nineteenth century, the greedy and hungry child – the voracious child – is equal to the sinful child with regards to original sin (p.94).

Of the two novels, *Masterman Ready* is particularly concerned with an extreme example of a child's undying hunger. Young Tommy likes everything, and is usually immensely naughty. As a result of his constant misbehaviour, phrases such as 'Well, then, he shall have no dinner till ...' (Marryat, 1970: 146) or 'You'll have no dinner this day, you may be sure' (p.204) acquire a formulaic character. The message for modesty is evident: 'The fried fish was excellent, and Master Tommy was nearly choked by a bone, which stuck in his throat, in consequence for his being so greedy, and eating so fast' (p.213).

By strictly regulating Tommy's diet thus, his parents and, ultimately, Ready, as another adult, control him. Only if he acts as they require him does he receive his meal. The Seagraves hence turn from parents into masters. This is in accord with Christiane Bimberg's equation that in eating habits, especially where and with whom food is consumed, parents behave to children as masters to servants (1999: 12).

The structure is repeated in Ballantyne's narrative in the dependencies among the boys. Jack is more than once referred to as their leader, being the noblest and oldest of the three. This hierarchy of dependency and power play is emphasised, even if in a joking nature, when the boys find oysters, much to Peterkin's delight,

'I'll be able to keep you in good order now, Master Peterkin,' says Jack. 'You know you can't dive any better than a cat. So, sir, whenever you behave ill, you shall have no oysters for breakfast'. (Ballantyne, 1966: 52).

Mervyn Nicholson claims in his paper 'Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others' that

power over food = power over the people. At the same time and for the same reasons, control over food signifies independence. ... Thus, food = (1) power over life = (2) power over others = (3) control of one's own destiny. (1987: 48)

His claim does not only underline the striking aspect of power relations in Robinsonades, but also raises questions about cannibalism. In *Robinson Crusoe*, power over food signifies domination. The relation of eater and eaten can thus be compared to that of the powerful and powerless (Nicholson, 1987: 39). Accordingly, eating = possessing = domination (Heims, 1983: 190–91). Cannibalism simply justifies imperialism in the eighteenth century through turning the actual victims into victimisers (p.193). It is worth emphasising that particularly Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* focuses on cannibalism and the cruelties involved. It reflects what was being taught in nineteenth-century Britain about native peoples. The natives' humanity is frequently denied; for example, by referring to them as monsters (Ballantyne, 1966: 174, 237). These conceptions are used to justify Britain's merciless dealings with native people in the imperial project, and to estrange the white man from indigenous peoples. Norman Kiell summarises the gist of the use of cannibalism in Victorian adventure tales thus: 'There is a relation between nature and culture through the opposition of raw food, a product of nature, to cooked food, a product of culture' (1995: 126). Culture here implies civilisation, of which the British thought native peoples were incapable.

The expression of gustatory utopia, social education and the processes of othering as part of justifying Britain's imperialism are three very striking functions of food in nineteenth-century Robinsonades. Although these aspects are not part of the research traditionally done in this genre, they nevertheless mirror the didactics and imperial ideologies conveyed in many a Victorian adventure narrative.

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Food, Love and Childhood: Surviving and Thriving in the Deepwoods – Monsters and Monstrous Appetites

Rebecca Ann Long

There is an essential primal connection between the food we eat, the homes we inhabit and the bodies we must sustain. Children's literature is fundamentally informed by that connection, by the link between satisfying hunger and experiencing the safety, security and emplacement of a home environment. But sometimes that link is problematised when a food supply is disrupted or contaminated or when the sanctity of the home is violated.

In *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature* (2000), Maria Nikolajeva talks – in the context of myths, fairy tales and literary archetypes – of the subconscious fear that child figures experience that one day their supply of food will disappear. In Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell's Deepwoods trilogy, Twig, the series' central protagonist, does not experience this fear, rather he yearns or is homesick for a lifestyle and a domestic space that he has never known, for food that nourishes and excites him. In many fairy tales, food becomes a token or a symbol of belonging; in certain myths, food from home accompanies the protagonist through the forest (*Beyond the Deepwoods (BTD)*, 2006: 185).

One of the primary functions of food in children's literature is to serve as a link back home when child heroes embark on adventures. But because Twig's home with the woodtrolls has been problematised by his stepmother Spelda's revelations about the circumstances of his adoption, he has been cut adrift in the vast wilderness of the Deepwoods. This is a place where the food is strange, monstrous and even poisonous, and where Twig himself is also a stranger. In the vastness of the forest he must not only fend for himself and find food, he must also find a new home. So the need for food and the quest for home are inextricably linked, given that each domestic space Twig encounters in the Deepwoods is defined by the food its inhabitants consume.

Twig is very often alone in the Deepwoods, alone with himself and with his thoughts. Even in the company of others – with the exception of the banderbear – Twig feels lonely and excluded. Chris Riddell's illustrations highlight this isolation, often placing Twig in the centre of the Deepwoods wildness. His illustrations explore the problematic dynamic between food and home by placing Twig, the child figure at the heart of the narrative, at the centre of images that depict an experience of childhood that is defined by the violence associated with the production and consumption of food in the Deepwoods.

In the forest, food is the fundamental and basic foundation of community. As Twig moves through the Deepwoods, he engages with and relates to each community he encounters through the foods associated with those communities. His experience of home and home spaces is mediated through food. In fact, the production and consumption of food is intimately linked to relationships, to the domestic space, to belonging. Twig survives in the Deepwoods – but does he thrive? The image Riddell's illustrations present us with is one of a painfully thin young boy whose body is, to all intents and purposes, as slender as a twig. Often, we perceive the forest through and in relation to Twig's body. While he is often surrounded by food in the Deepwoods, we never see him eat. Riddell does not give us a visual image of Twig eating. If food is one of the defining aspects of individual communities in the Deepwoods, then we can say that the woodtrolls, his adoptive family and community are defined by the foods they eat. Twig finds many of these foods repulsive. So instead of food and home forming positive associations for him, food becomes connected with the gaps and breaks in his identity. Food does not mean security for Twig; rather, it is another external manifestation of the difference he feels internally. The only illustration of the Snatchwood cabin in the text highlights this.

Twig and Spelda are alone together, yet Twig has his back to his adoptive mother; there is already a distance between them. There is no food visible in the scene and we are painfully aware of Twig's slender form as it is dwarfed by Spelda's solid bulk. Twig is, it seems, pining or wasting away in the heart of his own home. Twig's childhood is defined in a perverse way by the food he eats – or rather the food he is given. When he leaves the Snatchwood cabin and finds himself alone in the forest, he is suddenly responsible for his own survival, for nourishing his own body and sustaining his own mind and soul. He begins to grow out of his childhood, even as he forages for food to maintain that growth.

Twig is sorely tempted to eat the fruits he finds in the forest, but he knows he cannot; for 'although many of the fruits and berries in the Deepwoods [are] sweet and nourishing, many more [are] deadly' (*BTD*: 133). And Twig has no way of knowing which is which. This tension between nourishment and survival is one that the forest inhabitants experience every day. Knowledge of their surroundings is fundamental to their survival. Food itself becomes monstrous, poisonous: fruits that can blind, fruits that can explode, fruits that can induce paralysis. Death is far from the only danger when it comes to food. Twig must learn how to screen his food, how to regulate his own appetite and to recognise that food in the Deepwoods means both life and death in equal measure; food can be nourishing and monstrous. As a child in the Deepwoods, Twig is especially vulnerable to acts of violence and to poisonous substances.

So what does food mean in the Deepwoods? It means identity, it means survival; it means power and domination. It is linked to culture, to family, to belonging – to home. In a place where everything that moves is food for something else, movement through the forest is linked – often literally – to the pursuit of food in either a foraging or a predatory context. Much of the food the forest has to offer is animate and sentient; food literally has a life of its own. When everything and everyone is food, survival becomes a network of complicated relationships based on self-control, on power, on community, in a place where the danger of being consumed by a hunter, by emotions, or even by circumstances, is constant.

The Deepwoods illustrations highlight the relationship between food and community in the Deepwoods and, through the figure of Twig, visually represent a childhood that is defined by both; food sustains the idea and the space of home in the forest. Twig engages with and relates to each community he encounters through food. His experience of home is mediated through the foods associated with those homes. Focusing on how Chris Riddell illustrates Twig in his environment and represents his growing body allows us to analyse how Twig survives and thrives, both in the

Deepwoods and out of it, and to explore the connection between food, the child body and the experience of home in children's literature.

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'Babies on Toast': Edible Children in Early Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature

Karen Williams

From Hansel and Gretel to Roald Dahl, throughout the history of juvenile literature, the threat of a child being consumed by an animal, a monster or, indeed, a human has simultaneously entertained and terrified generations of child readers.

When Thomas Hood humorously played with this well-established trope in selecting 'babies on toast' as the dish of choice for his 'wicked' giants in his fairy tale 'The Three Great Giants', he engaged with the idea of what the critic Marina Warner calls the 'enemy Other': the assigning of cannibalistic taboos to a figure of threat in order to distance this figure from the realm of the normative (1998: 161).

I argue that the image of the edible child, one that is common in early nineteenth-century children's literature, has particularly resonance in this period of political, social and industrial upheaval.

Drawing on examples of the physical or metaphoric consumption of the whole or part of the child, I interrogate the significance of such images within the context of the rise of consumer culture and the subsequent commodification of the child, the relative unease at the potentially porous boundaries between animal and human, and within the idea of the subsuming of the child into the adult through the Romantic inscription of the child as 'father of the man'.

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Poachers and Scavengers: Reconceptualising Food in Children's Literature

Sarah Layzell Hardstaff

This article draws on the research I undertook for my MPhil thesis, focusing on food acquisition as a means of highlighting the socioeconomic positioning of characters in children's literature. I became interested in the theme of feast and famine in a slightly back-to-front way, initially looking at child characters portrayed as having been financially affected by the absence of a parent – absent parents being fairly commonplace in children's literature. My initial corpus included works such as *Slake's Limbo* (Felice Homan, 1974), *Danny the Champion of the World* (Roald Dahl, 1975), *Homecoming* (Cynthia Voigt, 1981), *The Baby and Fly Pie* (Melvin Burgess, 1993), *The Scavenger's Tale* (Rachel Anderson, 1997), *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (J.K. Rowling, 1997), *Private Peaceful* (Michael Morpurgo, 2003) and *The Hunger Games* (Suzanne Collins, 2008). Significant in all these books are the commonalities around, and shared relationship with, food. The protagonist in every one of these books steals food. They experience hunger. They dream of and witness others accessing the most magnificent feasts, and are sometimes invited to the table themselves.

Current children's literature criticism often focuses on food as symbolic of sexuality and relationships. Food and hunger are usually interpreted within a Freudian framework. Within this model, arguably, sexuality is considered as the primary driver for human behaviour. Fiona McCulloch summarises the current critical attitude to food in children's literature: 'In children's literature, the act of eating and drinking is often associated with Freud's theories of childhood sexuality and the oral phase' (2011: 90). Ann Alston points out that 'McGillis, Daniel, Nikolajeva and Katz have all emphasised the link between sex and the oral gratification that comes from food in children's literature' (2008: 111). Maria Nikolajeva, for example, writes that 'Food and sexuality are interchangeable in myth' (2000: 131), working from the premise that children's literature is mythic in nature. In *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, Holly Blackford states that 'food is symbolically linked with our conceptions of female sexuality, desire, and development' (2009: 41). Food is often seen as a 'stand-in' for sexuality, a way to explore issues of desire, power, repression and gratification in literature for children without tackling the taboo subject of sex. As an expansion on this theme, many critics also consider the motif of food in children's literature to function as symbolic of family relationships. For Alston, the way in which food is consumed functions as a marker of a 'good' or 'bad' family, regardless of social class. The power associated with food is described in sexual rather than economic terms: 'to feed someone is to exercise power, to penetrate metaphorically the body of another and to gratify desire' (Alston, 2008: 105).

Food is thus seen as symbolic of sexuality, morality, emotional development and family relationships. Susan Honeyman considers this idea from a different perspective, arguing that as 'food is one of the primary vehicles of struggle and control in child culture' (2010: 47), it can be interpreted in terms of its relationship to socioeconomic and political struggles. By focusing on the sexuality and emotional development signified by food, we sidestep the wider structural social issues that these books seem to be bringing to the table.

In his major philosophical work, *The Principle of Hope* ([1959] 1986), Ernst Bloch offers a counterargument to Freudian theory that is particularly pertinent to a study of food in children's literature. Bloch suggests that psychoanalytical models, with their focus on sex and power as the primary drivers behind all human activity, are severely limited by their failure to account for what he sees as the most basic, primary drive of all: hunger. Bloch argues that:

all too little has been said so far about hunger ... a man dies without nourishment, whereas we can live a little while longer without the pleasures of love-making. It is all the more possible to live without satisfying our power-drive, all the more possible without returning into the unconscious of our five-hundred-thousand-year-old forefathers. But the unemployed person on the verge of collapse, who has not eaten for days, has really been led to the oldest needy place of our existence and makes it visible ... the cry of hunger is probably the strongest single cry that can be directly presented. ... The stomach is the first lamp into which oil must be poured. Its longing is precise, its drive is so unavoidable that it cannot even be repressed for long. (1986: 65)

Bloch saw not only hunger, but also what he termed 'expectant emotions', including hope, fear, anxiety and despair, as motivated by socioeconomic conditions. Seen from this perspective, food ceases to be a stand-in for sexuality: the child eats, sometimes to excess, because food is the key to human survival. A child steals to survive. A child shares food in order to help others survive, or perhaps to control others, though economically rather than sexually. Issues of power are still of primary importance – the question of who can access food, and who controls access to food are of particular interest. A lack of food is of huge significance in itself, and, while it may not reflect the experience of a book's readership, it nonetheless reflects the experience of the majority of human beings for the entirety of human history. So, the question I would ask is not what does food tell us about emotional life and morality, but what do emotional life and morality can tell us about access to food, and, by extension, the socioeconomic positioning of fictional characters.

Notes

- 1 For a brief introduction to Bloch's work, see The utopian function of fairy tales and fantasy: Ernst Bloch the Marxist and J.R.R. Tolkien the Catholic. In Zipes, J. (2002) *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky (pp.146–78.)

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- [Sarah Hardstaff is an MPhil student in Children's Literature at the University of Cambridge. Her MPhil thesis explores the themes of poaching and scavenging in young adult hunger fiction, with a focus on Cynthia Voigt's *Homecoming* (Tillerman cycle, Book 1, 1981) and the first novel in Suzanne Collins's Hunger Games trilogy, *The Hunger Games* (2008).]

‘Crunchy Apples to you, Comrades’: Alex Shearer’s *Bootleg*

Rebecca R. Butler

Imagine a world in which eating chocolate is forbidden by government statute. The Good for You Party has won a general election and imposes its rules about sweets and chocolate. It is a rare achievement for any author to write a book that is not only a telling political satire, but also a compelling read for children aged ten plus.

What can a government do to protect us from our weaknesses? They can make us wear seat belts and stop us smoking in public places. But, so far, governments have not dictated what we eat.

How far is a citizen entitled to oppose laws that seem arbitrary or unjust? Shearer, in his book *Bootleg* (2003) sides with the bootleggers, Smudger and Huntly, as they find a recipe for chocolate, locate hidden supplies of ingredients and find some secret collaborators such as Mrs Bubby.

This book poses a question that goes to the heart of modern life. How do we help children, faced with an ever-widening range of self-destructive temptations, to act responsibly without actually telling them ‘Because I said so’? Part of the answer is to expose young readers to the complexities of books like *Bootleg*.

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The Mad Hatter’s Coffee Party: Bridging the Gastronomical Divide in the Translation of Children’s Literature

Gili Bar-Hillel

Food is one of the great cultural dividers. A dish that is taken for granted as a staple in one culture may hardly be considered edible in another. For literary translators, the translation of passages relating to food is often quite challenging, as the translation becomes a feat not merely of finding the right words, but of attempting to render equivalent associations, allusions and imagery, despite the very different roles that a certain food may play in different cultures.

Children’s literature is full of references to food: hence the translation of children’s literature is full of food-translation pitfalls. Anne Shirley’s mundane breakfast in the 1908 novel *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery becomes an outlandish and exotic feast in early Hebrew translations before conventional terms had been found for muffins and maple syrup. Edmund’s willingness in C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* series (1950–1956) to turn traitor for the taste of ‘Turkish delight’ is harder to understand in a country where *rahat lokum* is a common, cheap sweet.

Translation failures are always entertaining, but, more importantly, instances in which translations fall short are opportunities for profound insight into the symbols and attributes of different cultures.

I draw from my extensive experience of working on translations from English to Hebrew for examples of the revelations that can come out of the struggle to adequately translate food items.

The Myth of the Magic Porridge Pot: Never-Ending Edibles in Children's Literature

Franziska Burstyn

Food that is able to magically reproduce itself infinitely is a motif prevalent in fairy tales and children's literature alike. It is closely associated to the myth of the land of plenty, a concept frequently depicted in medieval literature throughout Europe and featured in one of the Middle English Kildare poems, namely 'The Land of Cokaygne'. The idea of a never-ending food source is featured in a number of fairy tales, most prominently in the Brothers Grimm's fairy tale about the magic porridge pot. While these magical edibles offer a glimpse into the imagination of a land of plenty, they are at the same time linked to periods of famine. They function as a compensation for the harsh reality of the protagonists, who usually discover such magical food when in desperate need of it. While the fairy tale about the magic porridge pot features most basic food merely to nourish the starving protagonists, the motif is shifted to a more fantastical approach in children's literature, most prominently in Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding* (1918). Accordingly, I examine the motif of magically appearing never-ending food as a mythical element in fairy tales within their socio-historical background and look at the relics of this motif in children's literature.

[Franziska Burstyn is a first year PhD candidate in the research project Canon Formation and Social Imaginaries in British Fiction for Children and Young Adults at the University of Siegen, Germany. Her academic interests are centred on children's and young adult literature, folklore culture and food in literature.]

A Varied Menu: Children's Poetry about Food

Pat Pinsent

Considering the interest that most of them have in the subject, it is surprising that poetry for children that allows for the fact that they enjoy food seems to be relatively sparse in quantity, at least before the twentieth century. There are of course many nursery rhymes that mention food, but most well-established anthologies of children's poetry tend to give it little attention. For instance, *The Faber Book of Children's Verse* (1953) allocates only seven of its 384 pages to this theme, while the few relevant poems in *The Rattle Bag* (1982) and *The School Bag* (1997), both edited by Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney, seem to have been written with an adult audience in mind. *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse* (1973), edited by Iona and Peter Opie, includes some stern admonitions about good manners from a fifteenth-century manuscript ('Eat not thy meat too hastily ... Pick not thy teeth with thy knife ... Nor spit thou not over the table ...'), most of which we would have no hesitation in endorsing. If such advice is obeyed, onlookers will judge that 'A gentleman was here'. In the Opies' collection there are also a number of poems against gluttony, while we are indebted to Lewis Carroll's Alice books for a view of eating as predation – remember the fate of the oysters in his 'The Walrus and the Carpenter'. Earlier than this, John Bunyan, in *A Book for Boys and Girls* (1686), a collection that draws morals from everyday objects, employs 'a penny loaf' as an emblem of the word of God.

We have to wait until the twentieth century for any significant number of poems that admit that the consumption of food is pleasurable. This is notable in the verse of

A.A. Milne, especially in 'Binker' where the speaker demands extra chocolate for his imaginary playmate. A positive attitude towards food is also to be found in some of the poems in a recent collection edited by Michael Rosen, *A to Z: The Best in Children's Poetry from Agard to Zephaniah* (2009), in some of which there is a distinctly celebratory attitude towards foods originating outside these islands, such as chickpeas and pasta. Perhaps this is another benefit of immigration!

[Pat Pinsent is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Roehampton, specialising in children's literature, the subject matter of most of her 15 books. She researches the current development of children's literature, and the relationship between it and spirituality/religion. She also edits a journal on feminism and religion, *Network*.]

Robina Pelham Burn

We have Gérard Depardieu to thank for this year's 14-and-under winner. Not the Depardieu who recently did battle with Air France flight attendants but the Depardieu of 25 years ago whose *Cyrano de Bergerac* captivated 13-year-old Noah Norman and prompted him to translate *Cyrano's* speech from Act II of Rostand's play. Noah's tour de force included the lines:

Please tell me, dear sir, what you want me to do?
Look for a mighty protector, take a sugar daddy,
And like the shadowy ivy, which creeps round a trunk,
Winning the tree's support by licking its bark,
Suck my way up by stealth instead of rising through force?
Hell no! ...

... Thrust myself from bosom to bosom,
Play the lounge lizard in the salon,
Set my course with love songs for oars,
And fill my sails with old ladies' adoring sighs?
Hell no!

George Szirtes wrote in his report: 'The sophistication, assurance, and indeed freshness ... was striking. It was at home with lines like "Play the lounge lizard in the salon". There were not too many lounge lizards in my 14-year-old vocabulary. The whole had the right kind of glitter.'

Translations from German took two of the three prizes in the 18-and-under category, and translations from Latvian, French and Greek (ancient and modern) were commended. Ephraim Levinson, joint winner of first prize, chose to translate Rilke's 'Abisag' because the story of the woman known as Abishag in English had featured in the *Haftarah* part of his Bar-Mitzvah. 'I was struck,' he wrote in his commentary, 'by how odd the tale was, of King David and the beautiful woman with whom he did not have sexual relations (1 Kings 1:3–4, Bill Clinton eat your heart out).' Ephraim's Rilke, formal and statuesque, contrasted with the romantic fluidity of Jules Laforgue's 'The Approaching Winter' in Anna Leader's translation. It is a poem that Patrick McGuinness described as terrifically difficult to translate well, and it was because Anna could not find a satisfactory translation online that she attempted to make her own.

Anna declaimed with great feeling at the prize evening:

the benches are drenched – no one sits here,
trust me: it's over until the start of next year,
(the benches so wet, so much rust in the grooves)
and the horns always blasting, calling out: tally-ho! ...

revealing in her commentary that 'This particular poem spoke to me because the *moi poétique* laments the onset of winter as if the end of the world was approaching – I also tend to take the weather too personally because it has such an impact on my mood.' She went on to say, 'I rhymed whenever possible, not always in the same places as in the French, but I tried to keep Laforgue's punctuation: the wistful ellipses and melodramatic exclamation marks are essential in creating the tone and the mood.'

Emil and the Detectives, Erich Kästner's famous children's classic, is now playing at the National Theatre. While Kästner's *Emil* series has long had an enthusiastic readership in Britain, his poetry is not well known. Harry Sellen came across 'Sachliche Romanze' ('A Down-to-Earth Affair' in Harry's version) in a German anthology and liked it for its

lack of poetic imagery and flowery language which he felt served to make the story even more poignant:

After they'd known each other for eight years
(And you could say they knew each other well),
They suddenly lost their love
As others lose a stick or a hat.
They were sad, but put on a brave face,
Tried to kiss as if nothing was wrong
And looked at each other, yet were at a loss.
In the end she cried. And he stood there.

Susan Bassnett was perhaps thinking of this poem when she wrote: 'One problem that translators of poetry wrestle with every year is the enormous difficulty of translating poems that seem to be very straightforward and easily understandable in the source language, but which all too often end up as banal in English. Translating the apparently simple is, in a different way, as tough as translating a very complex text, for the effect of simplicity is only achievable with considerable skill, and a translator needs comparable skills.' Susan and her fellow judges felt that Harry had successfully proved himself on that front.

Rilke, Laforgue and Kästner: three utterly different poets and poems. But that's what makes this competition so interesting. It may be that some entrants would be relieved to be given a poem to translate and not have to choose one for themselves; it would certainly spare the judges the difficult task of comparing apples with pears, not to mention kiwis and lychees; but then we wouldn't enjoy entries from 53 languages and such a wonderful variety of poems.

Although French, Spanish, German and Latin dominated in the two junior categories, it is cheering that 27 languages, including Georgian, Bosnian, Kazakh and Punjabi, were represented in the 18-and-under group. IBBY members will be aware that there are ever-increasing numbers of children in UK schools who do not study a language even to GCSE but who with their parents or grandparents speak a language other than English. The Spender Trust wants to encourage the writers and poets among them to enter the competition, and would like to enlist the help of English teachers across the country to tell them about the prize.

The last words should go to Jane Tozer, a winner in the Open category, who wrote after the prizegiving, 'Our young translators are rightly the stars, full of confidence and vivacity. ... They are all true poets, as well as translators.' Don't just take our word for it: read their poems for yourselves.

The winning and commended translations from this and previous years can be found at www.stephen-spender.org. Free booklets may be obtained by emailing info@stephenspender.org. The 2014 competition closes on 23 May 2014. For details of how to enter, see www.stephen-spender.org/2014_prize/entry_conditions_2014.html.

The Guardian newspaper has now taken over the partnership of the competition, which will now be called the Stephen Spender Prize for poetry translation in association with the Guardian. Entry to the competition will now entail a £5 fee per entry. See www.stephen-spender.org/2014_prize/entry_conditions_2014.html.

[Robina Pelham Burn is director of the Stephen Spender Trust.]

REVIEWS

Books about Children's Literature

Beyond the Book: Transforming Children's Literature (IBBY/NCRCL Papers 19)

Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding (eds), Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, 242pp.

Papers from the British IBBY/NCRCL MA conference held at Roehampton University, on 11 November 2012.

In the unlikely event that IBBY and NCRCL ever need a publicist for their Roehampton conference, look no further. IBBY conferences are invariably a GOOD THING; I always attend when I can, and they are always fascinating: there is always a buzz of enthusiasm; writers, publishers and academics interact with young writers and older writers, new scholars and seasoned scholars.

But does the buzz necessarily transfer into coherent books? Reading conference proceedings can only too often be like looking at other people's holiday snaps: I always find them interesting, but as P.G. Wodehouse said, you sometimes have to have been there to see why it's funny.

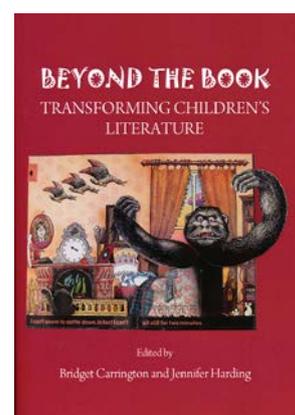
As someone who is in danger of becoming a serial reviewer for IBBY – I reviewed *What Do You See? International Perspectives on Children's Book Illustration* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) and *It Doesn't Have to Rhyme: Children and Poetry* (Pied Piper Publishing, 2011) – I fully understand the problems that the editors have. Both the earlier volumes triumphed over the difficulties of their origin by the sheer richness of their material, and they still contain much essential reading. But in both cases, I was led to wonder whether the books might have been more effective had the editors used that material to produce a fully *digested* and themed text – using fragments of the talks given rather than presenting the whole range of essays and reports. Of course, from an academic point of view (with a Research Assessment Exercise or whatever it is currently called) looming, and out of simple politeness to practising authors, this is not actually practical.

Which brings us to the 2012 conference volume.

Beyond the Book was clearly an outstanding conference, and, to go straight to the positives, the idea was excellent, and much of the material matches it. And it was about vital issues: as Bridget Carrington explains, 'This conference focused on the many and varied aspects of literature for children that are interpreted in physical ways, and might therefore be considered "Beyond the Book"'. Excellent.

Next: would I recommend you to buy the book? (This may save you a little time, if you trust my judgement.) Answer: yes. (And this is not simply reviewers' casual largesse: I have seen only a pdf, so may have to buy it myself.) Why? Well, on purely practical grounds, the production values are high, and it has the kind of intelligent indexing that is far to seek in these hurrying days. And, most importantly, it contains at least ten genuinely classy essays (among much else): but, as IBBY members are such a broad church, it might be as well to list them. These are essays that I would like to have to hand.

We begin with Matthew Grenby delivering a characteristically scholarly and entertaining piece – a 'brief examination of the origins of literature for young people, highlighting the interrelationship of handwritten vernacular texts with printed and published material in the early eighteenth century'. Now, you would be hard put to find a better, accessible scholarly essay *anywhere*, and it deals with family-produced texts and manuscript books, such as the famous children's library by Jane Johnson. This



is as good as this kind of thing gets, and, after all, every now and then, reviewers simply have to bow to a master.

Grenby sets the bar pretty high, but several writers are up to it. Gwen Athene Tarbox's account of teenage online writing communities in America, 'designed as a tool for their own writing, and also their criticism of the work of their peers', showing 'how this has had a significant influence on the commercial commissioning, publishing and marketing of young adult literature' is a jaw-dropping piece, beautifully complementing Grenby's. Then there's Kiera Vaclavik's 'The Dress of the Book: Children's Literature, Fashion and Fancy Dress' falls into the category of 'why on earth didn't somebody think of that before?' papers – and sparkingly done. The material in Hannah Field's 'Children's Movables and the Threat of the Mechanical Book' is not all original, but she provides some refreshing perspectives, and a lot of really useful reference material.

Then, for the practically minded among us, there is Kay Waddilove's account of the shadowing scheme of the 2012 Carnegie Medal, with input from Emilia Lamkin, a 12-year-old pupil from a Surrey school: a revelation – as well as a corrective for anyone who still thinks that children cannot contribute to the critical process (note: read Emilia carefully).

Other top-class pieces: Kerenza Ghosh's 'Walking with Wolves: Children's Responses to the Wolf Tradition in Stories', a hugely erudite essay (which reads like a trimmed down MA thesis – and none the worse for that); Sally Maynard's beautifully professional 'The Impact of e-Books on Young Children's Reading'; Anne Malewski's brilliant application of Intermediality – "'Second to the Right and Straight on till Gallifrey": The Uses of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* in Steven Moffat's *Doctor Who*'. And finally two pieces which will fascinate any student of the progress of the book: both elegantly and eruditely done: Kirsty Jenkins' 'Enhancing the Experience: Rekindling and Renewing Forgotten Texts' through specialist publishers, notably *Girls Gone By*, *The Abbey Chronicle* and *Fidra Press*; and Lucy Pearson's magisterial account of Penguin's *Peacocks* and Macmillan Education's *Topliners* – 'What's the Problem? Building Teenage Publishing in Britain'.

Ten of the best, and if you add in the 83 colour illustrations and 13 black and white, then you might go a long way to find a more useful volume. Buy it!

But You may notice that not all those excellent pieces actually fit very comfortably with the editors' description of the volume. Is there not a danger that the essays by Jenkins, Pearson, Ghosh and even Grenby may never be read by their most relevant audience because they are in the wrong book?

Perhaps more importantly, these ten essays are only ten of 23 pieces in the book – and I say 'pieces' advisedly, because by my (admittedly erratic) count, only 14 of the 23 pieces are really on the declared subject of the book, and only 14 (not the same 14) are crafted 'essays'. For example, there is the (highly professional) *report* of David Wood's speech: 'Lots of Suddenlies'; now, Wood is a unique and invaluable master contributor to children's theatre, and must have been an inspiring speaker, a great addition to the conference. But all we have here is 'gosh you should have been there': a link to his website in the introduction would have sufficed, tactful though his inclusion may have been. And the same, sadly, goes for the author talks and also the reports on what must have been fascinating workshops. Even (although we are on dangerous ground here, I know) the publishers' forum – however interesting it must have been in reality – smacks, on the page, of self-promotion.

As an ex-academic, I am on the side of conference organisers and (especially) editors, and I am aware of the pressures and necessary compromises involved at every step – between the call for papers and the publication falls the shadow (as it were). *Beyond the Book* is a useful, worthwhile volume, and worthy of a place on the shelf with its predecessors. But it seems to me to be right on the edge of what conventional

‘proceedings’ can – and should – do, and might be a heads up for future editors, who might find that they need to be a little more ruthless.

Peter Hunt

[Peter Hunt is Professor Emeritus in Children’s Literature at Cardiff University, and is currently Visiting Professor at Università Ca’Foscari, Venice. He has written or edited 30 books, including five of the Oxford University Press World’s Classics editions. His latest books are a *New Casebook* on Tolkien (Palgrave, 2013) and *How Did Long John Silver Loose His Leg?: and Twenty-Six Other Mysteries of Children’s Literature* with Dennis Butts (Lutterworth, 2013).]

The Lion’s World: A Journey into the Heart of Narnia

Rowan Williams, illus. Monica Capoferri, London: SPCK, pb. 978 0 2810 6895 1, 2012, £8.99; ebook 978 0 2810 6896 8, 2012, £8.99.

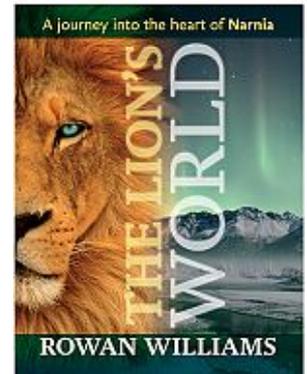
This pocket-size book by the former Archbishop of Canterbury is an expanded version of three lectures given in Canterbury Cathedral during Holy Week 2011. Williams starts by indicating how his initial lukewarm reaction to Lewis’s ‘Narnia’ books was replaced by a later discovery that they provide ‘a doorway into a simple intensity of feeling about God ... that was able to evoke an almost unbearable longing for that fullness of joy that Lewis points to so consistently in his best writing’ (pp.ix–x).

While admitting that the books have defects, all too readily pointed out by various hostile critics (and elaborated on in his second chapter), Williams asks why they nevertheless go on working so effectively; he shows how much their themes ‘are interwoven with what [Lewis] was thinking and writing in other contexts around the same time, and with material he had already published’. He suggests that the strongest of these themes is ‘the impossibility of forcing any person to accept love and the ... difficulty of receiving love when you are wedded to a certain picture of yourself’ (p.14). Like some of Lewis’s other books, the ‘Narnia’ chronicles present many instances of the problems of self-deception and the strangeness of encountering God, as displayed in the many occasions when the characters meet Aslan and the way in which he leads them to greater self-understanding. ‘Aslan’s strangeness and wildness ... are powerfully conveyed by his animal character’ (p.27) and reflect in a creative way the unexpectedness of any encounter with God. That Lewis should choose a young audience for his tales presenting this message is in keeping both with his high regard for children’s literature and his strong personal interest in story. His ‘depiction of the dual sense of human dignity and degradation ... central to the orthodox Christian tradition’ (p.23) is parallel to his books for adults that endeavour to reveal Christian doctrine to those who reject it without even understanding what they are rejecting.

Williams goes on to re-emphasise his conviction of the rightness of Lewis’s choice of a lion as the divine character in the light of the freedom it gives him to depict a physical relationship between Aslan and the children. An instance of this is when Lucy and Susan play with the Lion after his resurrection, in a way that would not be possible if he were a human character.

There are several instances in the books when Aslan leads one or more of the children to admit their personal responsibility for some unfortunate outcome, simply by holding their gaze and waiting for them to step beyond the ‘self-justification or evasion that any of us would normally offer when a disaster has happened’ (p.78). Williams quotes a friend of Lewis, Owen Barfield, that ‘self-knowledge, for him, had come to mean recognition of his own weaknesses and shortcomings’ (p.79) – an acceptance that was united to a conviction of divine forgiveness.

Williams refutes the familiar criticism, by Pullman and others, that Lewis’s Platonism devalues our world in its insistence that the true reality transcends the material world



as we know it. Instead, he suggests, 'it is not that the solid beauties and joys of the present are to be sacrificed in the name of "higher" realities that are more spiritual ... Aslan's world is ... more *material* [italics original] than ours, its sensory delights are more intense' (p.117). Williams suggests that by the time he wrote the Narnia books, Lewis had imbibed many of the theological ideas of his friend Charles Williams, which demand that the negative emphasis of much language about God be replaced by a positive affirmation that God 'contains, in infinite "excess", all that we can say about what is good or beautiful in the immediate objects we experience' (p.120).

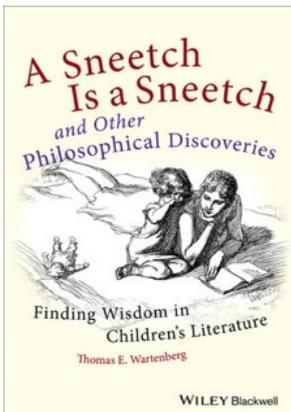
Lewis's Narniad is sometimes criticised because it ends not only with the death of the participants but also in the end of the world of Narnia. Williams shows how, having fought in the trenches of the First World War, Lewis was certainly not ignorant of the horror of death, but that for him 'the salient point about death was that it put an end to "endings" and opened up the prospect of growth without a final horizon' (p.131). 'The familiar world has to be broken open by the life it contains for joy to be full' (p.133).

In his conclusion, Williams emphasises how the Narnia books show the 'connectedness of all that is around us to its inexhaustible root or ground in the divine – the connectedness of the various mountain spurs to the central massif of Aslan's country' (pp.141–42). This he claims is '*grace* [italics original]: the unplanned and uncontrolled incursion into our self-preoccupied lives of God's joy in himself [sic]' (p.142). In the Narnia books, Lewis brings the reader 'to Narnia for a little in order to know Aslan better in this world' (p.144). Such an aim is clearly as relevant to the adult reader as to the child. Williams' in-depth theological analysis of these children's classics can indeed add depth, to the extent of driving adults to reread books they may have enjoyed as children but have put aside in more recent years.

Pat Pinsent

A Sneetch is a Sneetch and Other Philosophical Discoveries: Finding Wisdom in Children's Literature

Thomas E. Wartenberg, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pb. 978 0 4706 5683 9, 2013, £12.99, 176pp; ebook 978 1 1185 4506 5, 2013, £8.99.



The branch of children's literature in which Thomas Wartenberg finds wisdom is that of picture books: the 'sneetch' of his title is derived from *The Sneetches and Other Stories* (1961), in which Theodore Geisel (Dr Seuss) depicts 'a society in which one group discriminates against another group because of an easily perceptible difference between them' (p.118) – that of whether an individual sneetch has or has not a star on its belly. This leads to a discussion of the topic of 'discrimination' as such, whether applied to choice of friends, or more widely in society. Wartenberg applies this to how teachers might discuss with their pupils the question of 'why people find a need to view themselves as superior because they are members of one group rather than another' (p.124). This instance can serve to illustrate how Wartenberg uses picture books as a springboard for discussion of important issues: William Steig's *Shrek!* (1990) leads into Wittgenstein and the philosophy of language; *The Paper Bag Princess* (1980) by Robert Munsch (not 'Mursch' as in Wartenberg's text!) serves as an introduction to feminist philosophy. Other topics touched on, with reference to picture books that are less familiar to me, include ethics, philosophy of religion, existentialism and logic. There is also a 'Who's Who' of philosophers, a 'What's What' of philosophical terms, and a list of some additional texts that might repay similar treatment. There is, however, no index, and no list of the publishers and dates of the texts actually discussed in the book's 16 chapters.

Like most people who have looked at some of the incredible range of picture books published in recent years, I need no convincing about their potential for introducing

children to much deeper subjects than people who have only thought of them as colourful preliminaries to ‘proper’ books would be likely to recognise. By linking chosen books with specific philosophical approaches, Wartenberg may be doing a service to such people, while his incorporation of reference material on philosophy could be of some value to others. While I find it difficult to share the enthusiasm displayed in the blurbs on the back cover, the possibility that such an approach might win over some converts to the world of picture books is, I suppose, some justification for the book.

Pat Pinsent

Picture Books

Dominic Grows Sweetcorn

Mandy Ross, illus. Alison Bartlett, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8478 0327 6, 2013, £11.00, 28pp.

This picture book for ages 4–7 combines the themes of growing food, families, contemporary multicultural society and life in rural Jamaica in the 1960s. The story of Dominic and his Grandad growing sweetcorn together soon adopts a dual narrative using the double-page spread. The bold illustrations, in bright vibrant colours and a naive style, show Grandad and Dominic’s garden on one page and scenes depicting stories and memories of Grandad’s childhood in Jamaica on the other.

As the garden grows, so does Dominic’s understanding about his grandparent’s life history. We share Dominic’s developing knowledge of cultivating the plants, from preparing the ground, sowing the seeds and caring for the plants right through to useful tips on how to tell when the corn is ripe enough to harvest. At the same time we learn about the community in Jamaica, growing and trading different crops, sharing news, and how Grandma met Grandad, how they married, came to England to find work and then made it their home, working hard and raising their family.

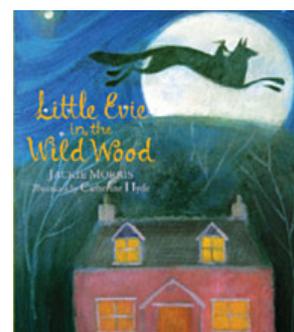
Dominic’s family share their harvest with their neighbours with a feast of barbecued sweetcorn. As a complement to the story a recipe for sweetcorn fritters is given at the end.

Julie Mills

Little Evie in the Wild Wood

Jackie Morris, illus. Catherine Hyde, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8478 0371 9, 2013, £12.99, 36pp.

The popular fairy tale ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ has received many treatments over the years and has influenced many artists and writers. It has clearly inspired Jackie Morris, who has replaced the anonymous heroine with Little Evie, and illustrator Catherine Hyde, who has chosen to depict her with long, loose, golden hair, wearing a red dress, rather than the traditional red hood and cape. The diminutive size of the heroine is significant as this makes her immediately appear vulnerable and at risk. Woods are primeval and frightening, and ‘wild woods’ also remind us of Kenneth Grahame’s chapter in *The Wind In the Willows* and how frightened Mole becomes when he is lost. Fears are a part of everyone’s childhood and wolves are often depicted as menacing and deadly, waiting to pounce and eat their human victim. However, even before beginning to read this evocative tale, the front cover is reassuring. It suggests our heroine will find peace with the wolf as there is a striking silhouette of a small girl, hair flowing, riding on the back of a flying wolf against a full, pinkish moon. Below is a large, warm, welcoming pink detached house with its glowing, yellow-lit windows against the dark night and sketched silver trees.



This picture book is a wonderful marriage of text and image, and both writer and illustrator clearly share a love and appreciation of nature. Catherine Hyde, who also illustrated *The Princess's Blankets* (2008) by Carol Ann Duffy, is well known for her intellectual and symbolic paintings, and this book is charged with atmosphere and has a dreamlike quality. 'I use the archetypal hare, stag, owl and fish as emblems of wildness, fertility and permanence: their movement and journeys through the paintings act as vehicles that bind the elements and the seasons together,' states Catherine Hyde on the Iona House Gallery website. We see the hare and the stag in this latest picture book, but centre stage is the encounter between Little Evie and the wolf.

Black typeface is carefully chosen and placed on the pages to give a sense of movement, whether it be Little Evie's progress along the path or to create pauses and tension. Even sounds are captured effectively by stressing their volume with the use of large bold type when describing, for instance, the growl that made the earth tremble or to draw attention to the enormous size of the wolf's eyes, ears and teeth. The black, menacing wolf dominates one page followed by an interesting choice of perspective showing Little Evie below, holding the basket up to the wolf as an offering sent by her Grandma as a gift. It looks as if we can expect the worst. There is, however, a wonderful surprise in store. This wolf is female: 'The wolf licked her lips.' The gift is described in terms of coloured jewels: seven jam tarts 'shining inside like blood red rubies' and 'golden pastry'. They are beautiful, but they also remind us of Evie's blood, further suggested by the heart design on each jam tart, and her golden hair which may be sacrificed to the wolf's appetite. As we turn the page we learn they shared the tarts, and the wolf's face with amber eyes is shown alongside hers. Far from being a menacing predator, this wolf is warm against the chill evening and allows her to climb onto her back as she is led back along the path through the wood to the edge of the wild wood. A warm red glow surrounds them. Halfway between cottage and wood Little Evie turned and saw the familiar sight of home with her mama waiting for her in the cottage door. Instead of the moon reflected in the wolf's eye, she could see the setting golden sun.

This is the first picture book that Jackie Morris has written for another illustrator. As Meg Rossoff writes: 'Jackie Morris does more than tell a story, she conjures glorious landscapes of the heart.' The combination of poetic language and beautiful illustration makes it not surprising that this book has been nominated for the 2014 Kate Greenaway Award. Both vivid written images and symbolic pictures create an atmospheric, mysterious tale producing its very own special magic.

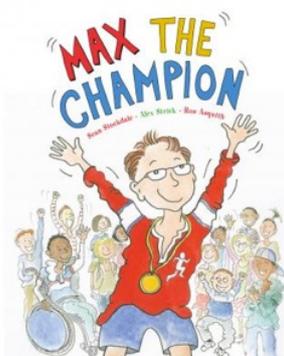
Susan Bailes

Max the Champion

Sean Stockdale and Alexandra Strick, illus. Ros Asquith, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8478 0 887, 2013, £11.99, 32pp.

This is a book that you cannot overlook. On the cover sporting a gold medal, is a bespectacled boy, arms raised aloft in triumph, the words MAX THE CHAMPION forming an arc above his head, with the authors' and illustrator's names nestling beneath it. The boy, Max, (whose namesake tamed the Wild Things in Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*) leads a crowd of celebrating children who come from a variety of backgrounds. Hard on his heels a young black boy steers a wheelchair. Open the book and the end pages fizz with images of sports equipment in action: balls, skate boards, bats, rackets. The dedication and title pages carry lively illustrations that will resonate after the book has been explored, and can be returned to later with a sense of recognition.

We meet Max in his bedroom awake before the alarm clock goes off. Rabbit is still tucked in beside him, Tortoise has tumbled to the floor, Max reclines on his bed, the



end board of which is painted with a football in mid-air. A poster on the wall advertises the 'World Cup', beside it a drawing of two boys on a sunny day entitled 'Dan + me', Dan being the boy in a wheelchair. Scattered on the floor are trainers, socks, tennis ball, a miniature tennis-player model, paper and pencil, and clothes spill out of adjacent drawers. This room belongs to a boy who has no time to tidy up before his next activity. Still in his pyjamas, stylishly patterned with tennis balls, the sports annual he was reading now under him, Max is already daydreaming. A simple text above his head slightly to the right and near the centre of the double page reads, 'Max loved sport. Night and day, it filled his dreams.' Thought bubbles just below the text emanating from Max take us to the opposing page where the bubble expands to contain Max's vision of sporting triumph.

Thereafter the text and illustration on the left-hand page tell the reader about Max's daily life, his environment and school, whilst on the right-hand page we see Max's inner view of his world, and his place in it. He brims with self-confident liveliness and his imagination has no limits. All this comes across with colourful verve. The reader is swept along with a joie de vivre that arises from Ros Asquith's colourful and graphic illustration of an apparently simple text. This however is deceptive. Whilst the illustrations amplify the spare text, the words are aptly chosen and used to maximum effect. Verbs in bold print emphasise Max's active agency: 'Max **jumped** out of bed, ... **dived** into his cereal, ... and **sped** off to school'. Other words evoke energy, sound and enthusiasm: WHOOSH, wheeeeeeee! ZOOM, SPLISH SPLASH, and, finally, a page headed YES. Below this one word of affirmation, the page is filled with happy faces and figures all distinctly depicted and with individual skin colours, dress sense and appearance: bespectacled children, a boy with an arm in a splint who also needs nasal oxygen, a boy in a wheelchair and a girl with cherubism.

By this time the theme of living life to the full whatever your attributes or differences are firmly established in the readers mind as being both everyday, ordinary and unremarkable, yet also an achievement. Some readers may have noticed that Max not only needs glasses but that he wears a hearing aid, discreetly fitted behind his left ear, and that he uses a nasal spray, which needs to be at hand in the day and the night. Tortoise and Rabbit accompany him everywhere, vital companions and witnesses of his daily endeavours. They provide a link between him and the reality of the outer world; their presence is also a hint of his young vulnerability.

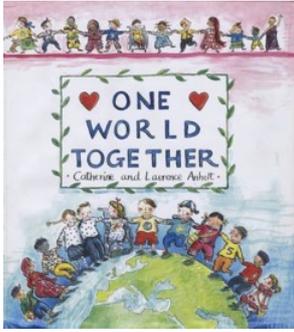
This book opens the door of readers' perception in the way it portrays one small boy's zest for life in an everyday context. It is a rewarding first read, but rereading it allows the reader to concentrate on details that he/she may have missed the first time. The rewards of close observation reveal a fuller picture of Max's life, the community he lives in and his capacity to reference and include everyone he meets into his imaginative world. The authors have considerable experience working professionally in the fields of education and disability. Aware of the limited range of diverse characters in stories and 'keen to encourage the existence of more books with inclusive characters', they decided to write their own story, find a publisher who believed in their concept, Frances Lincoln, and then an artist who could relate to the story and bring Max to life. The collaboration has succeeded brilliantly.

Judith Philo

One World Together

Catherine and Laurence Anholt, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8478 0405 1, 2013, £11.99, 32pp.

This is a large format and lavishly illustrated picture book for preschool and foundation stage readers. Its theme is loosely that of geography and friendship.

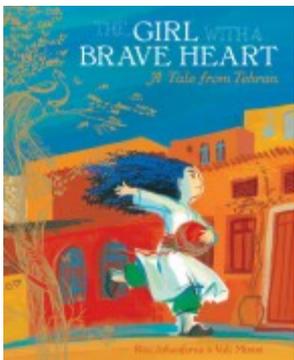


A boy travels to Brazil, Morocco, Kenya, the Netherlands, Sweden, China, India, Russia and Japan in search of a friend. On each double-page spread he learns some words and some basic facts about his new friend's country. In China the people eat with chopsticks. In Brazil everyone is mad about football. In Russia it's snowing.

Strikingly, the country that has remained most vividly in this reviewer's mind after reading the book is Sweden, where the narrator meets a girl named Lilly. She lives in a red wooden house. She plays the recorder. Her favourite book is *Pippi Longstocking*. What's remarkable about Lilly is that she uses a wheelchair. The fact that Lilly uses a wheelchair is clear from the pictures but is not remarked upon. There are too many books for children in which, if a character uses a wheelchair, that is promulgated as the only fact of interest about that person. Lilly is a brilliant example of casual inclusion. The authors could just as well have said she had blue eyes or long hair.

Congratulations to the authors and to Frances Lincoln. Twenty years from now we will be amazed that novels and picture-books for children once presented disabled characters as if their disability was the only significant thing about them.

Rebecca R. Butler



The Girl with the Brave Heart: A Tale from Tehran

Rita Jahanforuz, illus. Vali Mintzi, Oxford: Barefoot Books, hb. 978 1 8468 6928 0, 2013, £10.99, 42pp.

After her father's death Shiraz is made, like Cinderella, to do all the duties of the maid the family can no longer afford: cooking and cleaning for her stepmother and stepsister. One day she drops a ball of knitting wool into a neighbour's garden. Before she will return the wool, the old neighbour demands that Shiraz perform a number of strange tasks, commanding her to destroy her dirty kitchen and neglected garden. However, Shiraz instead cleans and restores the garden and kitchen, and treats the old lady with kindness and respect. On leaving, the old lady tells her to bathe in two pools at the back gate of her house. Returning home, her stepmother and sister do not recognise Shiraz as she now appears to have become very beautiful.

The next day, her stepmother, convinced that the two pools are the source of this magic, sends her own daughter to visit the old lady. She too is asked to perform the same destructive tasks, but this time she does exactly what is required, wrecking both the kitchen and the garden. On returning home after bathing in the pools, her mother does not recognise her because she has become so ugly. As it says on the final page, the two pools 'don't change the people who dip into them. They just make them look the way they feel on the inside'.

This is a traditional story from Tehran, retold and embellished by the Israeli singer Rita Jahanforuz, who emigrated with her family to Israel from Iran at the age of eight. It was originally published in Hebrew and is beautifully illustrated by artist Vali Mintzi. Vibrant gouache paintings vividly depict Shiraz's colourful environment, contrasting it with the neglect and devastation in the old lady's house before she sets it to rights. A black cat playing with a ball of red wool and never mentioned in the text, provides continuity from the first page right through to the end.

A lovely book to share and read aloud, emphasising traditional values and offering opportunities for discussion and comparison with other folk and fairy tales.

Sue Mansfield

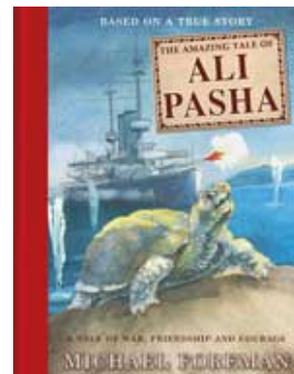
The Amazing Tale of Ali Pasha

Michael Foreman, Dorking: Templar, hb. 978 1 8487 7999 0, 2013, £12.99, 128pp.

This is the true story of a First World War Royal Navy man (Henry Friston), told through diaries, photos, illustrations, and by Henry himself, as an older man, as he recounts the events to a young cub reporter. Henry and his crew are involved as stretcher bearers at one stage during the war, and while in the battlefield he lands up in a shallow crater and discovers another occupant there – a tortoise. He decides to befriend the tortoise, calls him 'Ali Pasha' and smuggles him back to his ship where his mates take a shine to him and make sure he has a share of the food rations. When the war ends Henry decides to take him home and so Ali becomes a family pet for many years after and gains publicity from an article in the local paper.

This is a well-crafted story that sheds light on both the reality of war, but also on one event that made some of it bearable for Henry and his pals. The growing friendship between the young cub reporter and Henry is nicely drawn and the diaries take you into the heart of the experience of being in battle. The illustrations complement the story perfectly and the double-page spreads are particularly dramatic in depicting war at sea.

John Dunne

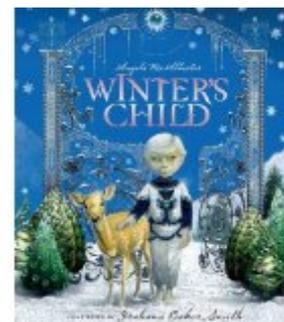


Winter's Child

Angela McAllister, illus. Grahame Baker-Smith, Dorking: Templar, hb. 978 1 8487 7545 9, £12.99, 2013, 40pp.

Angela McAllister was shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal in 2010 with *Leon and the Place Between*, while Grahame Baker-Smith won it with *Farther* the following year. With such a pedigree we would expect an exceptional and original picture book, in both text and image.

This is a modern fable of winter's magic, which can entrance dangerously. When Tom wishes winter would never end, he meets another boy who shares his love of snow and ice. Playing together every day, Tom hardly notices that spring doesn't come – until he realises the terrible effect the delay is having on the countryside and his sick grandma, as the family run out of firewood and food. In desperation Tom sacrifices his skis and the ladder to his tree house for firewood, and his friend, who is Winter's Child, realises that he must sacrifice his love of the season so that his earthly friend can survive. They each realise that for the seasons to go on and the world to continue, the friends must say goodbye until next year.



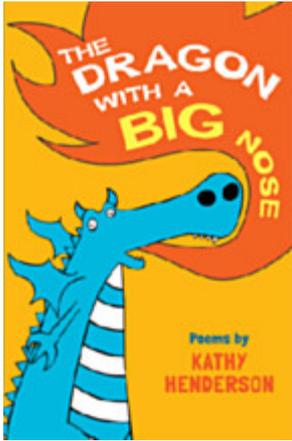
As befits a folktale, McAllister's narrative is simply told and allows us to draw the moral easily. Baker-Smith's illustrations, on the other hand, appear to this reader to be over-ambitious, burdened with detail and poorly designed for the text. The wintry northern-European blues that dominate the colour scheme sometimes make the text itself difficult to read at the top and bottom of the pages, where it disappears into a deep tone. The elaborate silvery-white decoration becomes repetitive, though where detail should be accurate, as in the endplates showing the gates in winter and spring, the indicators of changes in the natural world – flowers and birds – are non-specific. This is a disappointment: a haunting story crying out for a more sympathetic visual interpretation.

Bridget Carrington

Poetry

The Dragon with the Big Nose

Kathy Henderson, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0365 8, 2013, £6.99, 96pp. Age range 6+.



Henderson's book is a collection of her poems with two main themes: everyday life in the city and animals.

There are certain domains that might be regarded as traditional poetic arenas: thinking of pastoral scenes, innocent rural pastimes and homely virtues. This book is about none of these. It is contemporary and it is urban. It not only mentions the technology that drives the life of the city dweller in our century, it also celebrates the technology. It builds on the experiences of urban life, such as the visit of a plumber and the noises made by a toaster and a DVD machine. Even communication satellites and streetlights merit a celebration. Merrie England is a long way from this contemporary world, in which an electrical switch claims to be able to enchant the wiring.

'In the Rain' recounts the same episode from two contrasting points of view. As the rain falls, the irresistible desire of the child is to splash around in the puddles and kick up spray. The equally powerful yearning of the adult is to get back home and out of the wet.

'Today I Read a Bus Stop' describes the way words appear everywhere, not just in printed texts. They inhabit cereal packets and advertising hoardings. They appear in text messages, this latter point designed to appeal to today's technology-wise children. The poems will be particularly reassuring to readers who are intimidated by language, since it reinforces the idea that language springs from the human compulsion to communicate, to share, and is not just a rigorous rule book that comes out of a guide to grammar.

The tone of these poems is reminiscent of poetic changes that occurred in the 1930s when poets like W.E. Auden and Cecil Day Lewis brought poetry back from a romantic fantasy onto the streets of the real world.

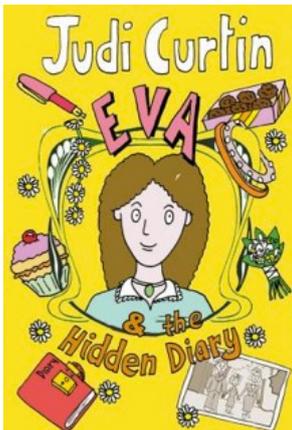
The verse forms are deceptively simple and rhyme sparingly used. The illustrations include pencil drawings, black-and-white ink pictures and some paper collages. Some of these poems could well be used in reading engagement campaigns for children who don't think they like reading and who think poetry is soft, especially children who inhabit the urban jungle.

Rebecca R. Butler

Story Books, Novels and Tales

Eva and the Hidden Diary

Judi Curtin, illus. Woody Fox, Dublin: O'Brien Press, pb. 978 1 8471 7588 5, 2013, £6.99, 240pp.; epub 978 1 8471 7618 9, 2013, €7.99. Age range 10+.



Eva Gordon, age 13, is excited. She is heading for a holiday in Seacove, Ireland, where her best friend Kate lives. (In a previous instalment Eva helped Kate find her stepfamily, with whom she now lives.)

In Seacove, Eva and Kate stumble across a diary from 1948. It's the diary of Daisy Bridget Lavelle, age 13. The diary entries depict Daisy and her family as happy in Seacove, until near the end of the entries when it transpires that they have to leave Seacove – no reason stated. Why did the Lavelle family have to leave? That is the first mystery that Eva and Kate decide to solve.

A second problem faced by Kate and Eva concerns Kate's family. Her older stepsister Zoe has a job in London to which she is keen to return. But if the family – Kate's

stepfather, Zoe and her son Simon – head for London, Kate will be left behind living with her grandmother Martha. The problem will be solved if Kate and Eva can find Zoe a job in Seacove, but it has to be a job at least as attractive as her London post.

The novel now embarks on the pursuit of those two quests. Will the girls solve the mystery of the Lavelle family? And can they find Zoe a worthwhile job?

The characters of Eva and Kate are three-dimensional, credible and funny. They encounter bullies. Eva rides her bike past the bullies through a muddy puddle, splashing her persecutors. The reader is left in no doubt that if anyone can bring their two quests to successful conclusions, these two forces of nature will pull it off.

I was impressed by one truly skilful piece of writing. Curtin must deal on behalf of one of her characters with a question of mental health. This poses a tricky issue. If the language and attitudes towards mental health are really typical of the 1940s, they will strike a modern reader as barbaric. But if they conform to contemporary values, they will strike a modern reader as anachronistic. Curtin tells her readers just enough to command their attention, but not enough to look out of time. In short, she steers through this muddy puddle as skilfully as Eva.

Rebecca R. Butler

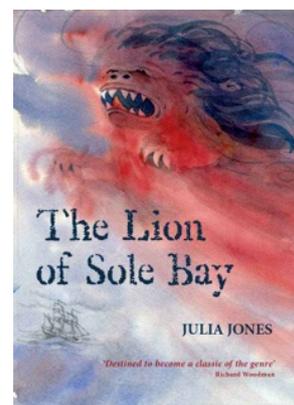
The Lion of Sole Bay

Julia Jones, illus. Claudia Myatt, Chelmsford: Golden Duck, pb. 978 1 8992 6218 2, 2013, £7.99, 285pp.

The Strong Winds trilogy, which I've already reviewed for *IBBYLink* (see below) is an excellent twenty-first-century adventure story, infused with references to classic literature for children, a powerful celebration of boats, and a sensitive examination of the complications of family life and its impact on succeeding generations. Julia Jones' latest addition to what is now the Strong Winds series, centre stages Luke, a more minor figure in the previous three adventures, who has moved from being a looked-after child to being part of his newly reunited family. As in all the best traditions of children's literature, Luke's family is away on holiday in Italy, leaving him to spend the week with his father on board the *Lowestoft Lass*, the boat they are renovating.

A serious accident to Luke's Dad, involving a hyperactive girl from Luke's school, leaves Luke on his own, and determined to mind the boat and to complete a kayaking course he's booked onto. All the elements for a classic children's adventure are set in place, and the events that unfold more than merit this book to be considered as serious a contender for classic status as Arthur Ransome's classic sailing adventure series of the *Swallows and Amazons* (1930–1947).

As we grew to expect from Jones' earlier novels, she draws her characters with insight, sensitivity and an understanding of the complexity of human nature, especially among the young. Angela, the hyperactive, disruptive and epileptic classmate, discovers that she has an outstanding aptitude for kayaking, while Luke himself, previously a dreamer, finds that he can be practical, courageous and insightful, able to revise his opinions as he learns more about, and better understands, individuals. Helen, the Dutch girl on the neighbouring boat exists in a living nightmare, her mother deeply entrenched in the Dark Arts she discovered during her academic research into seventeenth-century Dutch history. Her drug use and belief in witchcraft is destroying her hold on reality and her ability to look after her daughter. With her domineering, terrifying companion, the self-styled Elsevier (named after a seventeenth-century Dutch captain), any attempt at adult responsibility on board the *Drie Vrouwen* devolves onto Helen. The internal conflict within each of these child characters as they struggle their way through their fears towards truth, justice and self-knowledge drives the book alongside its exciting adventure story. While the enforced sea voyage of the latter part of the book recalls Ransome's *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* (1937), the old, senile Russian sailor-turned-



hermit, Peter, initially a frightening character to the children, appears to live within his memory of characters from Ransome's *Old Peter's Russian Tales* (1921), and there's an intriguing hint that he may himself have known Ransome when that author lived and worked in Russia.

Jones' inspiration for the plot came from the figurehead that can still be seen on the Red Lion pub in Martlesham, Suffolk. This was originally on one of the Dutch ships, the *Stavoren*, which took part in the Third Anglo-Dutch War, and fought and was captured at the Battle of Sole Bay off Southwold in 1672. Visitors to Southwold can see more figureheads (though none as old as this one) in the Sailors' Reading Room, now a museum, and on at least one house in the town.

The whole Anglo–Dutch antagonism is relived through the characters in the book, though I'm not sure it's finally resolved! Names and heritage are also an important theme, with Angela's father, an English Vandervelde who is seeking a connection with the famous Dutch maritime artists van der Velde, and whose lectures on the Battle of Sole Bay form an appendix to the novel itself. The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich (now part of Royal Museums Greenwich) holds an extensive collection of the van de Velde family's work, both drawings and paintings. The Queen's House, an exquisite small Palladian palace built by Inigo Jones in the early seventeenth century, now another part of RMG, always displays a selection of the paintings and, until 1 April 2014, has a special exhibition of van der Velde drawings.

Both as outstanding adventures with an unrivalled ability to describe the sea and sailing, as well as deeply insightful studies of adolescent and family conflict and growth, the Strong Winds series does indeed sail from strength to strength.

The Strong Winds Trilogy Reviews

A review of *The Salt-Stained Book*, the first book, appeared in *IBBYLink* 32 (Autumn 2011), that of *A Ravelled Flag* in *IBBYLink* 34 (Summer 2012) and the final instalment, *Ghosting Home* can be found in *IBBYLink* 36 (Spring 2013). As I've indicated in those reviews, Julia Jones owns the yacht *Peter Duck*, one of a number belonging at one time or another to Arthur Ransome, whence comes her fascination with that author's books and life, and with sailing.

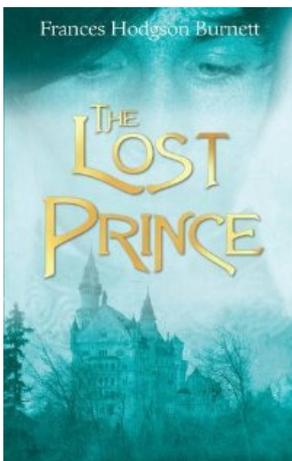
Bridget Carrington

The Lost Prince

Frances Hodgson Burnett, intro. Nicolette Jones, illus. Maurice L. Bower, London: Jane Nissen Books, pb. 978 1 9032 5246 8, 2013, £8.99, 304pp; Age range 9–14.

Except among scholars of children's literature, Frances Hodgson Burnett is probably remembered now only for her 1911 novel *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess* (1904). In republishing this (abridged) version of her far less well-known 1915 novel *The Lost Prince*, Jane Nissen Books undoubtedly hopes to encourage readers to delve deeper into Burnett's plentiful but largely forgotten output. Apart from the ubiquitous (and often unreliable) 'print-on-demand' versions, there have been several editions in recent years, including a Puffin of 1971, and most if not all have found it expedient to reduce Burnett's text by pruning anything from single words to more extensive scything of the rather overblown (for current tastes) passages of description. The Jane Nissen edition has the advantage over some other modern editions of using the original Bower illustrations, though rather hazily reproduced.

Burnett's story describes the adventures of Marco Loristan, a 12-year-old refugee from Samavia, who has fled from that fictional war-torn mid-European country together with his father, and settled in the backstreets of London, where they work to unseat the usurpers in Samavia. Here Marco encounters The Rat, a disabled street urchin, who becomes his friend and eventually accompanies him on his mission through Europe to



restore Samavia's rightful king. Burnett's novel is very much in the popular late-nineteenth-century genre of Ruritanian romance, of which Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) and *Rupert of Hentzau* (1898) are the best known and longest enduring. However Burnett's novel also paints a graphic portrait of the early twentieth-century metropolitan slums, no doubt calling on her own girlhood memories of the impoverished streets in the Manchester area to which her mother moved the family before they finally emigrated to America. She also provides us with a swift word picture of many European cities known to the well-travelled Burnett, as the boys make their way undercover to Samavia.

The characterisation is unexceptional compared with her better-known works, and Burnett ensures that the social equilibrium is carefully maintained to reveal the true heir to the throne, while permitting loyal servants to succeed eventually within their appointed class. Despite this, *The Rat* is undoubtedly the more interesting of the two boys, quick witted and far more intuitive than his companion. I doubt, however, that this novel will grip even those younger readers who love Burnett's better-known books. By the time she wrote *The Lost Prince* Burnett had returned from a 20-year residence in Kent to settle again in America, and had long been a follower of Christian Science, spiritualism and theosophy, beliefs that engender in this novel a curious pseudo-Buddhist philosophy. Despite her distance from the events occurring in Europe from August 1914, one wonders if they influenced her choice of setting and of subject matter, as countries were drawn into the First World War, states toppled and rulers were overthrown. One also wonders whether this particular republication was chosen with this year's commemorations in mind.

Bridget Carrington

Rebecca Rocks

Anna Carey, Dublin: O'Brien Press, pb. 978 1 8471 7564 9, 2013, £6.99, 256pp.; epub 978 1 8471 7621 9, 2013, £6.99. Age range 13 +.

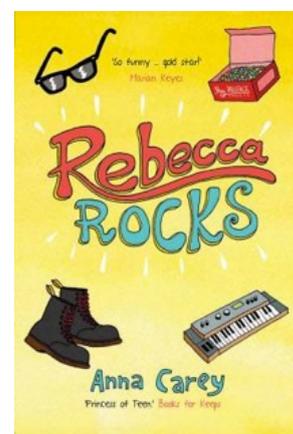
Rebecca Rafferty is almost 15, living in Ireland. Her concerns are typical for her age. She hasn't got a boyfriend, her older sister irritates her and she's worried about the summer exams. She and her two best friends, Alice and Cass, have a band called Hey Dollface. They are very excited because the band has been invited to a summer arts camp in Dublin where they will have a celebrity mentor. Is Hey Dollface about to hit the big time?

There is a complexity to the plot. Cass chooses this moment to come out as gay. She can't be certain how Rebecca and Alice will respond to this announcement, let alone the other members of the arts camp or the wider world.

For this reviewer, the book had two main strengths. The character of the protagonist, Rebecca, is depicted in three dimensions, strongly credible. The second strength is the deft way in which the author handles Cass's sexuality. Cass herself is quite at ease with her sexual preference. But her fear of rejection by her two friends and by the world in general is palpable. She has no idea how the Irish public will respond to a girl band with a lesbian participant.

The novel will bring comfort and comprehension to any young woman finding herself in Cass's situation (whether or not she is a budding pop star) or anyone wishing to understand how someone in that place would feel.

Rebecca R. Butler





Stories for Children

Oscar Wilde, illus. Charles Robinson, Dublin: O'Brien Press, hb. 978 1 8471 7589 2, 2013, £12.99, 80pp.

Oscar Wilde's stories for children were originally published in two collections, five appearing in 1888 as *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, illustrated as in the O'Brien volume by Charles Robinson, (brother of William Heath Robinson), and four tales appearing in 1891 in *A House of Pomegranates* (in later editions illustrated by Jessie M King). The O'Brien Press chooses three of the five from the 1888 collection, 'The Happy Prince', 'The Nightingale and the Rose' and 'The Selfish Giant', and adds colour to those Robinson originals that were published as line drawings in an edition of 1913 with additional illustrations. Robinson's work, which appeared widely in children's books at the turn of the nineteenth–twentieth century, (for example, in the first UK edition of Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, as well as works by R.L. Stevenson and A.A. Milne), suggests a fusion of Charles Rennie Mackintosh with Aubrey Beardsley, a combination that eminently suits Wilde's work and recalls the modern reader to that enticing era of late Victorian pre-Raphaelism, art nouveau, arts and crafts and orientalism.

These three tales are deservedly well known and enjoyed in other collections, but this edition will undoubtedly attract a new audience, with large clear print, and each page further interpreted for a younger audience by the beautiful images. Appended to the collection are brief notes on Wilde, Robinson, and the designer's decision to add colour to the original illustrations.

Altogether a lovely book.

Bridget Carrington

Stormclouds: A Boy, a Girl, a Dangerous Border

Brian Gallagher, Dublin: O'Brien Press, pb. 978 1 8471 7579 3; 2013, £6.99, 224pp.; epub 978 1 8471 7617 2, £6.99.

This story is set in Northern Ireland during the periods preceding and following the 1969 riots. Dylan and Emma Goldman are middle-class Jewish twins, British born but having lived most of their young lives in Washington, DC. Their father is a journalist, their mother American.

Emma is keen on athletics. At her running club she befriends Maeve Kennedy, a Catholic girl. At football practice Dylan befriends Sammy Taylor, who is Protestant and who has a father prone to uncontrolled anger when he has (as the Irish say) 'drink taken'. The question at the heart of this novel is how these four 12 year olds from such very disparate backgrounds can maintain their friendships, despite the immense political, social and cultural pressures exerted on them.

Although the violence in Northern Ireland is of recent memory, few writers of children's books have tackled that period. *The Defender* (2004) by Alan Gibbons is one exception to this rule. Gallagher tackles this difficult issue head-on. What's more, Gallagher's characters live and breathe on the page. The reader is entirely engaged in the awful choices they have to make. One word of warning: anyone looking for a book about the Northern Ireland troubles where the violence is nicely edited out and the mutual hatred glossed over should look elsewhere. This book pulls not a single punch.

One of the strengths of this novel is the unflinching look it takes at sectarian violence. What happened in Northern Ireland and the way the conflict was at least partially resolved provide both a warning and a hopeful signal for an increasing number of such conflicts elsewhere in the world. The author deserves full credit for his honesty.

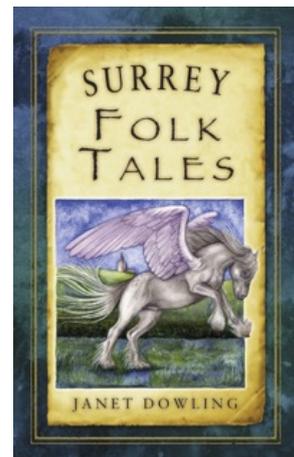
Rebecca R. Butler



Surrey Folk Tales

Janet Dowling, illus. Lawrence Heath, Stroud: The History Press, 978 0 7524 6635 4, 2013, £9.99, 192pp.; ebook 978 0 7524 7907 1, 2013, £7.99.*

This is a delightful collection of short tales, all with connections to with places in Surrey, beginning with two stories about dragons associated with locations near Guildford. The book concludes with an account of how one of Janet Dowling's own stories was recounted back to her by a woman in a café, three years after she had told it in a local school. The 28 other stories include a lengthy piece about Stephan [sic] Langton and King John, but most are no more than four to six pages in length. Although no specific age of audience is suggested by the publishers, it is apparent that Dowling's own experience as a storyteller in schools has informed her easy colloquial style: I think readers and listeners of all ages would enjoy these tales. They often involve historical characters – see for instance 'A Dish fit for a Queen' about William the Conqueror and his wife Matilda. There is also a small collection of verses and riddles.



Dowling gives details of how she found the stories, some of which emanate from historians and folklorists; she also provides useful material about sources. In one instance, however, she has adapted a Chinese tale to explain the presence of the Surrey puma. Attractive elements include the variety of stories and their association with real places in one of the home counties not often associated with fantasy. If the other books in the series are equally good, they could in time furnish a valuable resource for schools throughout the country.

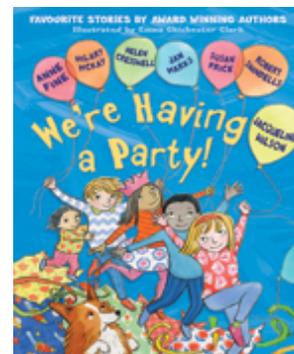
* This is part of a series published by The History Press covering much of the British Isles, with a range of different story collectors. See www.thehistorypress.co.uk.

Pat Pinsent

We're Having a Party

Illus. Emma Chichester Clark, Dorking: Piccadilly Press, pb. 978 1 8481 2329 8, [1994] 2013, £7.99; 224pp. Age range 5+.

Balloons held aloft and imprinted with the names of seven authors, a procession of dancing children promote this book against a turquoise background. The back cover states, '7 top authors, 7 brilliant stories for seven year olds'. This is a special volume to celebrate 30 years of the Piccadilly Press and features stories by Anne Fine, Hilary McKay, Jan Mark, Helen Cresswell, Susan Price, Jacqueline Wilson and Robert Swindells. It is an attractive-looking paperback, slightly wider than a standard size volume, but handy for a seven year old to hold and which may encourage them to read for themselves. This a real possibility as each story is fully illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark. Her drawings guide the reader, adding a delightful visual dimension perfectly in tune with the narrative tone.



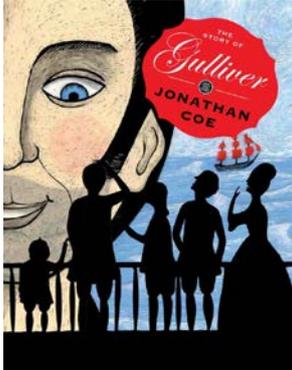
What is it like to lose a best friend when that family moves away? What does being the youngest family member feel like, or being an 'only one'? How do you know if you will get on with new neighbours next door? What happens if you are left in charge of a truculent small cousin who likes hiding things? How do you manage to breakfast, get ready for school and sort out your baby brother when you wake up to find mum has left early for work and dad mustn't be disturbed after working all night? The story of a little dog, treated like royalty by his owner, and a popular playmate of the local street kids continues to be passed down the generations and retains its freshness. Imaginary friends make their mark as allies or problem solvers. New relationships develop from unpromising beginnings. How unfathomable can parents be? How resourceful children are when they have to be! Tales of everyday family life become less ordinary as each story is related. The idiosyncrasies of families and individuals, their inventive and creative solutions to their particular situations and the challenges of their daily lives

and relationships are amusing and distinctive, and fill this reader with admiration for their ingenuity.

Judith Philo

The Story of Gulliver

Jonathan Coe, illus. Sarah Oddi, London: Pushkin Children's Books, hb. 978 1 7826 9019 1, £14.99, [2011] 2013, 96pp.



This is a heavy hardback, printed on thick recycled paper. Each chapter has a title, e.g. 'One', on a recto and the chapter starting on the next recto. The margins are very wide, and the text is a large font. The text is therefore very clear to read but clarity could have been maintained with less wide margins and perhaps a smaller font. The use of title pages for each chapter seems an unnecessary addition as does such thick paper. All this adds up to an expensive and heavy book. There is no table of contents listing the chapters.

The title of the book describes it. This is a retelling of the classic story *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift and is part of the Save the Story project, set up by author Alessandro Baricco in collaboration with Scuola Holden (the Holden School) in Turin, Italy. (See below for other titles in the series.) It is a long time since I have read the story so I read this retelling afresh. To remind you of the gist of the tale: *Gulliver's Travels* is a tale of a man's adventures into mythical worlds and has four parts, each part describing a different expedition involving a voyage by sea. Gulliver is a doctor with a wife and child, but he is a wanderlust.

Although the original book was in four parts and written in the first person, this retelling has nine chapters and an epilogue and is narrated. Each chapter starts with a summary set in red large type; for example, chapter 3:

Gulliver had done a great service to the people of Lilliput by capturing the ships of their enemies. But afterwards he made a big mistake by criticising the Emperor, and they began to mistrust each other.

This is following the format of the original in having such summaries at the beginning of each chapter.

The illustrations are startling. The colours are solid with solid black also used. They give a vivid impression of the size of the various peoples that Gulliver encounters on each adventure, in contrast to his own size. Readers of all ages will enjoy them. The illustration in the margin shows Gulliver awaking on a beach after his first shipwreck to find



He was tied down by hundreds of strong threads, and even his hair had been tied to the ground. The sun was so bright in his eyes that he could hardly see.

The tiny men are the Lilliputians.

I found the style rather 'pedantic', as if the author was trying to make sure that the reader really understands each message. This means that the sentences are sometimes rather long. It is hard to judge the age range for the reader. The adventures are quite complex and the reader must keep hold of the thread and the names of the peoples and the islands. Some of the illustrations are islands but there is no list of them so I didn't know where to look to get help in following Gulliver as he moves from place to place, particularly within a chapter.

The narrative style, compared with the first person telling in the original, seems to take the edge off the text. For example the following has more pungency than the quote above:

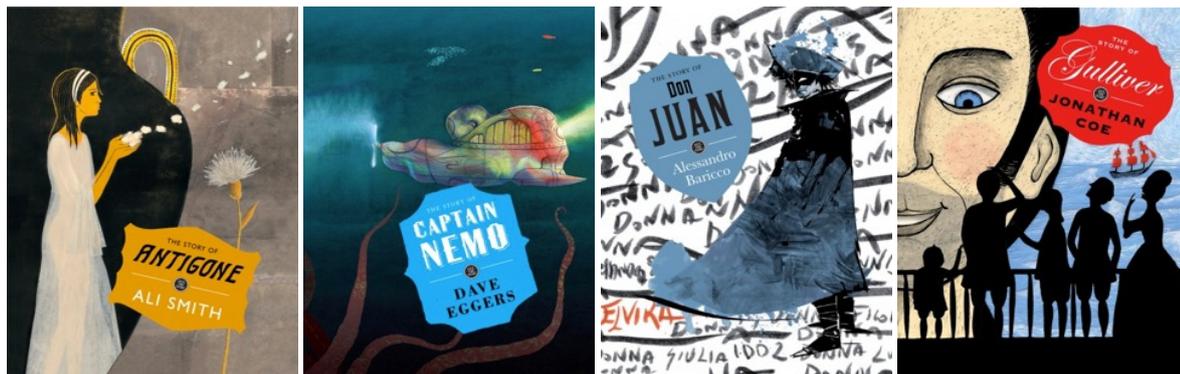
I found my arms and legs were strongly fastened on each side to the ground; and

my hair, which was long and thick, tied down in the same manner. I likewise felt several slender ligatures across my body, from my arm-pits to my thighs. I could only look upwards; the sun began to grow hot, and the light offended my eyes.

So at what level is the book aimed? A sophisticated child may find the stories rather too unreal, although the humour and illustrations will cause them enjoyment. I suggest it is more a book to be shared by a young child and an adult. Young children will enjoy the humour and the adult will enjoy the political satire.

Jennifer Harding

Save the Story Project



The Story of Antigone

Ali Smith, illus. Laura Paoletti, London: Pushkin Children's Books, hb. 978 1 7826 9016 0, 2013, £14.99, 104pp.

The Story of Captain Nemo

Dave Eggers, illus. Fabian Negrin, London: Pushkin Children's Books, hb. 978 1 7826 9018 4, 2013, £14.99, 104pp

The Story of Don Juan

Alessandro Baricco, illus. Alessandro Maria Nacar, trans. Ann Goldstein, London: Pushkin Children's Books, hb. 978 1 7826 9015 3, 2013, £14.99, 96pp.

The Story of Gulliver

Jonathon Coe, illus. Sara Oddi, London: Pushkin Children's Books, hb. 978 1 7826 9019 1, 2013, £14.99, 96pp.

These four stylish volumes are part of a series launched by Pushkin Children's Books under the heading Save the Story. The aim is to retell iconic stories, whatever form the original – myth or original novel – for young people today. To do this they have commissioned some of the best-known adult authors writing today – Dave Eggers, Ali Smith and Jonathan Coe are among the ones featured here, but other volumes boast writers such as Umberto Eco and Andrea Camilleri. These authors are then matched with exciting illustrative talent to create concise texts in an elegant format.

The project is the vision of Alessandro Baricco, arising out of his work with the Scuola Holden in Turin, Italy, where storytelling in all its forms is explored.

There is always a question mark over the retelling of classic novels. Who are they for? Will they prevent readers from finding the original text with all the nuances intended by the author? Should some themes be reduced to a 100 pages? There is less of a problem with tales that have always been retold – myths, legends, and folk and fairy tales. These, perhaps, represent the raw materials for creative minds. Here Ali Smith's take on the Antigone story is particularly effective, while Baricco captures the ambivalence of the character of Don Juan (or Don Giovanni). What about Gulliver and

Nemo? It is instructive that all the volumes use the title 'The Story of ...' allowing a certain distance from the original. All refer to the original, expressing the hope that readers will go on to explore the full text. David Eggers makes a point of reminding us of the misconceptions that have often arisen around iconic novels, and is clear he is not retelling the whole of Verne's adventure – rather introducing us to a particular character. Jonathan Coe does take the reader through all Gulliver's adventures – refreshing in itself.

If there is a need for such retellings, I would always want examples such as these where there is an empathy between the original and the retold version; a sense of purpose beyond the demands of a curriculum. In addition, these are books that demand to be picked up. They are lovely objects. Thought has been taken over the production, from font to paper type. All the illustrators provide a distinctive vision – whether Sara Oddi's almost childish view of Gulliver or Nacar's edgy graphics for Don Juan; Negrin's realism or Paoletti's muted palette. Add them to your child's or school's library.

Ferelith Hordon

The Black Cat Detectives

Wendy Meddour, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0226 2, £5.99, 2012, 176 pp.

Wendy Meddour's first book, *A Hen in the Wardrobe*, was a multiple award winner and was shortlisted for the Branford-Boase award, the most prestigious prize for a first novel written for children.

This second book returns to suburban Cinnamon Grove, and this time Ramzi, his best friend Shaima and her little brother Iqbal become involved in a scheme to find romance for Aunt Urooj, whose major passion is rare beetles. However, the children have to turn detective when they suspect that possible perfect future husband Rasheed, recruited through the dating website Truly Deeply Muslims, is not all he seems.

Suitable for upper-junior-age children, this is an affectionate comedy of the everyday crises and triumphs, surprises and disappointments of family, friendship and school life. It's well observed, with a delicacy and wit that is reflected in Meddour's own sketchy line drawings that decorate the text. The story also serves, with Shaima's appended glossary of terms and expressions that will be unfamiliar to many readers, as a charming and amusing introduction to Muslim family life. It all ends happily, too, with Aunt Urooj finding love in an unexpected quarter.

Clive Barnes

The Ghastly McNastys: The Lost Treasure of Little Snoring

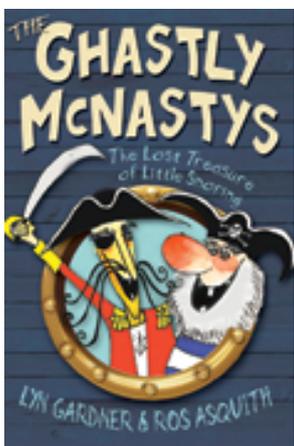
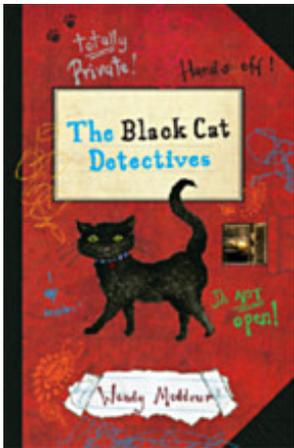
Lyn Gardner, illus. Ros Asquith, Dorking: Piccadilly Press, pb. 978 1 1481 2344 1, 2013, £5.99, 192pp.

In this exuberant madcap tale, the revolting pirate twins Gruesome and Grisly McNasty are thwarted in their attempt to steal the treasure of the sleepy port of Little Snoring by Tat, a boy braver than he is brainy, his friend Hetty, who knows nearly everything, and Tat's Cat, who is called Dog because that's what he thinks he is.

Supported by a wealth of Ros Asquith cartoons, the story, suitable for eight year olds and above, is, at turns, mildly disgusting, surreal and corny.

The pirate captain's mate, Mrs Slime, suffers from an extraordinarily productive nose, boxing kangaroos emerge from a very deep hole dug for treasure and the gruesome twins' characteristic curses are 'Sweaty socks!' and 'Squeaky pants!'

There is much punning and wordplay, fun with the format of the book, and some invitation to reader participation, particularly in deciphering mirror writing. If it's a bit



reminiscent of Andy Stanton's Mr Gum series and Cressida Cresswell's *How to Train Your Dragon*, this is even more frenetic and doesn't have the same clarity of character and plot and, dare I say it, the comic subtlety of its illustrious predecessors. That said, it's still great fun.

Clive Barnes

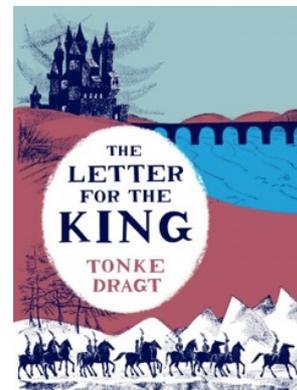
The Letter for the King

Tonke Dragt, trans. Laura Watkinson, London: Pushkin Children's Books, hb. 978 1 7826 9010 8, 2013, £16.99, 460pp.

Tiuri hopes to become a knight. With his friends, he is undergoing the traditional vigil to establish his credentials. They are forbidden to talk and forbidden to leave the chapel until daybreak. Then a desperate man knocks on the chapel door; he has a quest for Tiuri. But in accepting this will Tiuri forfeit his right to be a knight? Leaving his vigil, he embarks on an adventure that takes him way from his home to face dangers and enemies – and all for a secret that cannot be revealed until he reaches his destination.

Already a classic in Holland where it first appeared in 1962, it is good to see it here at last. It is in many ways old-fashioned, both in its approach to storytelling and in the type of story. Set in a medieval world, it is a tale of chivalry, a quest in which honour and personal integrity are paramount. Tiuri, rather like Bunyan's pilgrim, must face not just physical dangers, but temptations that aim to persuade him to break the trust placed on him. There is certainly a villain to be defeated but – and if there is a fault, this is where it lies – neither he nor his master are developed fully, resulting in a certain loss of tension. However, Dragt is meticulous in her description. The reader really does follow Tiuri's every step. This, and the old-fashioned idealism at its heart, puts it within the reach of readers as young as nine who have a need for satisfying, imaginative texts. However, for older readers there is a level of metaphor and symbolism that is not so common today, but which adds depth and resonance to the whole. Adult readers, especially those who are fans of Violet Needham, will find much to enjoy. Lacking frenetic action and frenetic prose, with little real and no gratuitous violence, this is a story that will, nevertheless, remain with you.

Ferelith Hordon



The 21th Annual IBBY UK/NCRCL MA conference will take place at Roehampton University, London, on Saturday 15 November 2014 (date to be confirmed). The subject is 'Belonging and Inclusion', the title not yet being finalised.

For more information contact Anne Lazim annlazim@googlemail.com or Clive Barnes clivejbarnes@gmail.com.

The next issue of *IBBYLink* is *IBBYLink* 40, Summer 2014 (copydate 30 April 2014) and will be on the topic of information books, with the title 'Facts rather than Fiction: Information Books for Young People'.

Articles on other subjects, reports, information about conferences, and similar items are also welcomed. Contributions to Ferelith Hordon: fhordon@aol.com.

If you are interested in becoming a reviewer for *IBBYLink*, contact Sue Mansfield: mansfield37@btinternet.com. New reviewers are always welcome.

Titles for Review

Publishers and others with books to be reviewed in *IBBYLink* should send them to Sue Mansfield at 37 Gartmoor Gardens, London SW19 6NX; mansfield37@btinternet.com.

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