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Editorial by Pat Pinsent

'In every language, in every part of the world, Story is the fundamental grammar of all thought and of all communication.'

(Aidan Chambers, at the 1982 IBBY Congress held in Cambridge)

Membership of IBBY unites people who possess a faith in the power of literature to bring people from different backgrounds together. In particular, by concentrating on books for the young, we exhibit optimism concerning the future of the human race—the hope that children, by reading literature from their own and other countries, will acquire a real understanding of other cultures, as well as a development of their own potential.

If then the members of British IBBY are drawn together by this kind of positive agenda, it is a pity that we seem to have neglected the opportunity to tell each other our stories about literature. All of us have read books which we want to recommend to others, have attended lectures and conferences which have left us feeling inspired, and have ideas and hopes for the future which we would like to share.

I want to suggest that the British IBBY Newsletter can be a means of helping members to achieve this kind of communication. In this issue we have a number of reports of occasions when people united by their love of children's literature have assembled together. We have some information about future opportunities for a similar kind of interchange, and for ways to extend our knowledge of children's books. Even more significantly, we have an article by Anne Fine, the Children's Laureate in succession to Quentin Blake. Her appointment, like that of her predecessor, marks the increase in status

of children's literature and represents a fulfilment of the hopes of those concerned to foster children's reading.

So let us tell our stories—of conferences attended, in Britain and overseas, of books read and recommended, of our own thoughts about literature and its power. The future of this Newsletter depends on YOU if it is truly to represent our enthusiasms and the desire, stated in the IBBY brochure, that 'children everywhere have access to good books.'

To encourage you to contribute, we are suggesting that future issues be devoted to specific themes, although we shall happily also include material not specific to these subjects. I hope that the next issue

will appear by the time of the annual Conference in November, and would particularly like to receive reviews, reports, articles, etc. related to the very important theme of Disability. How effectively do recent children's books portray people who are disabled, and, equally important, how well do these books communicate with them? Are such children getting equal access to

books? What is being done to make their situation comparable with that of other children? What happens in the rest of the world?

Send contributions to me, either by post (23 Burcott Rd., Purley, CR8 4AD) or e-mail (PatPinsent@aol.com), by the end of September. Plans for the future include devoting the February issue to Fairy tales, in the wake of the November conference on that subject, and the June issue to translation in preparation for the September conference of the Society of Authors which is on that theme. If you want to write something relevant to either of the later themes, don't wait until then to do so!

Make this Newsletter yours!

A NEW NAME FOR THE BRITISH IBBY NEWSLETTER?

Part of the process of making the image of this Newsletter more interesting is choosing a more interesting name (I can't think of many less exciting!) On the analogy of IBBY's Bookbird, I wondered about using a bird name. Among those which have been suggested are Phoenix, The Sparrow, Letterbird, Bulletin Bird, Merlin, Bookworm and Bluebird... Do you have any ideas? Send them to me (PatPinsent@aol.com) and we can do something about an appropriate icon for the cover next time!

British IBBY Activities

Since the last IBBY Newsletter appeared, in June 2000, there have been six meetings of the British IBBY Committee—in July, September, October, December, January and June—in addition of course to the Annual Conference in November and the Annual General Meeting, which was held at Macmillan's in May. In future I hope that we shall be able to give you much more up to the minute accounts of what goes on at meetings, but for now, a brief summary of the discussion of a range of topics is all that is practicable.

Events

The annual conference (which will remain at Roehampton for the foreseeable future) has inevitably been the subject of discussion during the year, but because Kim Reynolds has done so much of the hard work in contacting potential speakers, with the help of the Roehampton team, especially Maureen Murdock, for the domestic details, the committee did not need to spend too long on this event. Another major focus for discussion has been arranging British events for International Children's Book day (see the report on page 9).

One of the most interesting areas of debate at meetings over the past year has been the question of whether we should plan to have the biennial IBBY Congress in Britain. A working party has been set up to consider the practicalities of taking on responsibility for this large event, possibly in 2008.

Awards

The committee has also spent time discussing names to put forward for various honours, and as you can imagine, at such points committee members are likely to become passionately involved in the advocacy of their own favourites, though there generally tends eventually to be a high degree of consensus. Among the subjects of such discussions was the need for recommendations to be put to the judges for the Children's Laureate to succeed Quentin Blake.

Another was the recommendations for the next Hans Andersen Award. After Anthony Browne's triumph

as illustrator in 2000, and the additional pleasure at seeing Peter Dickinson short-listed, the Committee members are taking very seriously their role in choosing the British writer and illustrator to be recommended for 2002. The selection of the IBBY Honour Books (text, illustration and translation) has also been the subject of some consideration.

Another International IBBY award is the Asahi (from a Japanese newspaper), for the promotion of children's reading. In 2001 this award went to a reading development programme located in a library in a remote part of northwestern Russia. The British IBBY committee agreed to recommend for 2002 the European Picture Book Collection, which is designed to facilitate children's awareness of different languages and cultures as displayed in the twenty books of the collection, with minimal text, from a range of European countries.

Liaison with Other Organisations

One of the closest links British IBBY has is the one with Irish IBBY. Several Irish members attended our November conference, and they have continued to keep us informed about their activities. In response to the increasing numbers of people from ethnic minorities settling in Ireland, they are producing a Multicultural Guide to Children's Books, which is to be associated with a conference in the autumn, at which Ann Lazim, British IBBY Chair, will be one of the speakers.

Irish IBBY are also keen to co-operate if the plans for the IBBY Congress in Britain in 2008 go ahead. We are also seeking to collaborate more closely with Scottish members of British IBBY. Other organisations with which links which are being fostered include the Refugee Council.

As you can see, subjects considered at meetings range widely and are of interest to all concerned with children's books. Why not seriously consider becoming a member of the Committee?

Location and Officers

Ever since the re-inauguration of British IBBY in 1995 we have been fortunate to have had support from the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature at the University of Surrey Roehampton. Because IBBY business has been taking too much time, this level of support cannot continue, and much of the discussion at meetings during the past year has been about finding another base for British IBBY. After much debate, the situation appears to be that for the immediate future, we shall rely on having a postal address—soon to be announced—and, probably, website access, rather than an actual location. We are also losing the services of Maureen Murdock as secretary and Susan Hancock as Treasurer. We hope that the measures we are currently taking to deal with their roles will prove adequate, but do be patient if there are any delays in answering queries! We hope to let you know more about this shortly. **If any readers are able to suggest a possible location for British IBBY, or are able to offer us time or expertise in any areas, we should be very glad to hear from them!**

On Being the New Children's Laureate

by Anne Fine

A shortlisting for Children's Laureate gives a writer a deal of warning as to whether they would, or would not, like the post. When, two years ago, Quentin Blake strolled away rakishly wearing his laurels, I suspect both Peter Dickinson and I felt a rush of real relief. Back to the desk, back to quiet, and back to what, after all, has obviously been most important to all three of us—the work.

But over the last two years, the novelist's well-known two word sharpened prong, 'What if...?', began to dig. What if you had the clout to say what you believed, and instead of just sighing 'Oh, Anne!', people at least had to pretend to listen?

And would it be so much more travel and work? I, after all, have been rattling around the country for a quarter of a century, talking-up books and libraries and reading. I've learned to conquer my fear of radio (though the sudden mental unpluggings of female middle age have introduced fresh terrors!). I've learned to distinguish between television appearances that might prove useful, and those that are simply moving wallpaper filler. I've written scores of small pieces on books and children and reading. And, like Jan Mark, I know the railway timetable backwards, temporary speed restrictions and all.

So why not me? I might not photograph as well as JKR, but I've had time to make more friends, and be in a position to pull in more favours.

So when Lois asked me, in effect, if I was in or out, I said I was in. And I was delighted, a few weeks later, to be offered this tremendous honour—not least because of the 'lifetime achievement' aspect of the award. That means a lot to me. I've worked hard. I think my books are good. And I am proud to have won more awards than any other British children's writer I know, even if the record is snatched away any day now.

But I did expect to wake up a few days later with staring eyes, thinking, 'Oh, Lord. What have I done?' And I couldn't help noticing Dick peering at me each morning, the question, 'Is it today?' etched on his face.

It hasn't happened. The moment Lois told me the news, I realised I had hatched a plan. I'm being coy because I know it will work better if we start

with everything in place—especially the visual stuff that means the people we've been sounding out in television and the press will find it easier to come up trumps. So give us time.

I thought at first people were perhaps being polite. But I asked those who tell me when they think I'm off beam. And even they have said, 'Yes, this could work. This really could make a difference.'

And surely that's the point of the job. To try to make a difference. For me, what helps me most, and probably will keep me sane, is knowing that, in the last couple of years, I've had a

writing bonanza—another adult novel, one for older children, three books for younger readers, and enough short stories to put together a collection.

So it was time to take a break. What better way to spend it than trying to offer readers like my younger self a slightly better chance of growing up in a book-rich, reading culture. I've benefited from it all my life. Why shouldn't they?

And after, just like Quentin, I'll hurl my laurels away and get back to what we authors and illustrators do best: pleasing ourselves with our own work—and, hopefully, a million others.

**“So why not me?
I might not
photograph as
well as JKR,
but I had time
to make more
friends...”**

Anne Fine on Being
the
New Children's
Laureate

Find out more about the Children's Laureate at

<http://www.childrenslaureate.org>

and about Anne Fine at

<http://www.annefine.co.uk>

The Big Issues

Representations of socially marginalised groups and individuals in children's literature, past and present

7TH IBBY Conference, November 2000

It's worth applying in good time if you want to attend the annual IBBY/MA conference at Roehampton. Both the programme and the lecture room have been packed in recent years, and the conference held in November 2000 was no exception.

The first plenary session was a talk by Beverley Naidoo, well-known both for her books challenging racism, notably *Journey to Jo'burg*, and for her research into how best to combat some children's negative attitudes towards those of different ethnic origins. Her talk was entitled, 'Are all your books about humanity?' which she explained was a question addressed to her by a young Palestinian girl who was impressed to observe how the movement against injustice in South Africa had bridged the kind of divides which separate people in her own homeland. Naidoo talked about her more recent fiction, exploring issues like the social and economic boundaries still extant in South Africa and the problems faced by asylum seekers in Britain.

Advance publicity had suggested that J.K. Rowling would be launching a booklet, *Families Just Like Us*, produced by the Young Book Trust and the National Council for Homeless Families, but in fact this action was very ably performed by the well-known children's author, Mary Hoffman. The booklet (to which Rowling has contributed the foreword) is a valuable resource, giving descriptions of more than a hundred children's books, appealing to ages from birth to secondary school; these books all have an emphasis on family relationships and also touch on issues such as divorce, bereavement and absent parents.

Participants were then offered a choice between two talks, by Anna Davin and Nicholas Tucker, and a presentation of IBBY Honour Books by Leena Maissen, the executive director of IBBY. The picture books selected for their particular merit by most of

the National Sections display both a wealth of visual excitement and a fascinating variety of approach to producing texts for young children. The morning was completed by the first group of workshop presentations, so that by the time we broke for a wine reception and lunch, we certainly felt that we had already been offered much food for thought!

After lunch, the second group of workshops took place. Among the many varieties of marginalisation in children's literature considered in both sets of workshops, were those of the elderly, the working class, ethnic minorities, tramps, drug addicts, and people with learning difficulties, while the situation of victimised groups in the past, such as Chinese migrant workers in America, was not forgotten. Attention was also given to Irish children's literature, European picture books, and to books which themselves have been marginalised.

"Are all your books about humanity?"

The workshops were followed by a short session devoted to British IBBY news, including reports from the IBBY Congress in September 2000 in Columbia. The day concluded with a talk from Anthony Browne, the winner

of the Hans Christian Andersen award for illustration, who concentrated on images from his books which were relevant to the theme of the conference. Those members of the Committee who were not suffering from mental indigestion at the rich intellectual diet, or too dampened by the heavy rain, had a particularly pleasant conclusion to the day in a small party held at the house of Elizabeth Laird.

Most of the papers from the conference are appearing in a book which should be published in good time before the next IBBY conference. Even if you were there, you will have been unable to attend every paper—and if you were not, you will certainly want a copy of the many thought-provoking contributions on this important subject!

British IBBY Annual General Meeting

Monday, May 14th, 2001 • Macmillans, Victoria

Until fairly recently, the IBBY Annual General Meeting tended to be a very rushed affair, held during the lunch break of the annual conference and attended by the few who managed to tear themselves away from the wine reception, the excellent food, and the tempting displays of books for sale. The decision to change this to a separate evening occasion proved very successful in 2000, when a relatively large group turned up, enticed by Peter Dickinson and Anthony Browne, the Hans Andersen nominees, as speakers. In 2001, because it proved impossible to send out publicity about the meeting much in advance, and the identity of the speakers was not widely known until the last moment, numbers were inevitably smaller. Nevertheless, those who were able to come enjoyed a very pleasant evening, enhanced by splendid Macmillan hospitality.

The business side of the meeting, covering the same issues as are presented on page 2 of this Newsletter, was completed fairly briskly, and was followed by two interesting and contrasted talks. Axel Scheffler, an illustrator whose best known book is probably *Gruffalo*, talked about his career in the children's book world in Britain and abroad, raising the question as to whether an English text might be more manageable in the contemporary picture book than German. He also speculated as to whether the attitude to publishing picture books on the Continent was more 'laissez faire' than in Britain, where he has to attend many more team meetings. He suggested that perhaps the British market is more commercially competitive than that on the continent.

The subject of co-editions was raised in Axel Scheffler's talk, but it was given greater emphasis by

the second speaker Tracy Phillips, Rights and Sales Director at Macmillan. Since fifty per cent of the revenue of children's books is derived from rights' sales, mostly foreign, co-editions are essential to survival in the market. Black and white co-editions are relatively cheap, allowing books to be produced in comparatively small numbers, sometimes even as low as a thousand copies. The production process for texts involving coloured pictures is much more expensive, however, so that a minimum number of fifteen to twenty thousand copies may be required for cost-effectiveness. The more elaborate the production process, the higher the number of copies needed to break even. Pop-up books, which need to be cut out by hand, require a minimum of fifty thousand copies, while 'Buddy Buggies', with their spiral plastic attachments for fixing on to pushchairs are particularly costly.

She highlighted a number of potential problem areas which arise in the process of books travelling across borders. Differences in orthography in different language areas may rule out alphabet books, food needs to be of a type that can be understood or easily adapted, and rhyming texts may be virtually impossible to translate. It was no surprise to her audience to hear that British picture books featuring cuddly pigs or centred on Christmas celebrations may not export to all possible markets, but we were less aware of the fact that hedgehogs are rather specific to the United Kingdom, while mice and wolves may be unpopular abroad. This talk gave us a new frame of reference for looking at picture books!

"Hedgehogs are rather specific to the UK, while mice and wolves are unpopular abroad..."

THE SILVER LECTURE January 2001

Peter Dickinson, British IBBY's selected author for the Hans Andersen Award in 2000 (he was short-listed) gave the Hodder Silver Lecture of 2001 with the title, 'The Perils of the Unreal'. He spoke of how nearly all his thirty or so children's books have an element of fantasy. He speculated as to whether the human fascination with the apparent impossible is an evolutionary trait. Pack animals are shackled by instinct, but human beings need to know people personally. Fantasy allows us to imagine a change in the rules, something which could help us to cope if such changes really happened. Perhaps our pleasure in fantasy suggests we need it for survival, just as fox cubs need to play. He spoke of how he used to tell stories to his own children in the car, making variations on fairy tales, such as a version of 'Snow White' in which the Queen has a cloak that adds to or takes off years from her age. He also writes detective stories for adults, and has made up royal family stories which he has found uncannily to predict future events.

Many people have commented on Dickinson's interest in language, something particularly apparent in his recent four volume book, *The Kin*, for which he invented 'Kinspeak'. This uses present tense only, with no relative clauses. He sees this simplicity of language as suggesting a fairly young readership, though in general, when asked what age reader he envisaged for his fiction, he replied, 'Any reader, old or young enough to enjoy it.' There are few authors, for either children or adults, who have excelled Dickinson's ability to retain an enthusiastic audience for nearly forty years.

British IBBY
Annual General
Meeting

The Silver Lecture

Fireworks on the Liffy

The Dublin Children's Literature Summer School, May 2001

by Elizabeth Laird

Everyone tells me that the Dublin Children's Literature Summer School is going to be fun, but I'm nervous anyway. Who wouldn't be, appearing on the same platform as Margaret Mahy, Malorie Blackman and Kevin Crossley-Holland, to name but three?

The time is a cool weekend in May. The place is the Dublin Writers' Museum. Here, we are on hallowed ground. In the hushed rooms of a grand old Georgian house in Parnell Square, Yeats, Joyce, Wilde, Beckett, Swift, Bowen, and many, many others gaze down contemplatively from their frames, over glass cases holding their scrawls and scribbles, their letters and secrets, their curiously vulnerable inkwells, pens and spectacles.

The participants are from all over Ireland, and it's true, they are amazingly friendly. It's an odd feeling, to step into a mirror world of children's literature. All the characters are here: the publisher (Michael O'Brien), the reviewer (Robert Dunbar), the academic (Professor Daithi O hOgain), and the writers (Siobhan Parkinson, Malachy Doyle and Patrick Ryan), as well as many librarians, teachers and booksellers. In London, I would be meeting old friends at a gathering like this, but nearly all these faces are new to me.

The theme is folklore, or, perhaps in wider sense, "story". The sessions are terrific. I come away with clutches of new books to read: Kevin Crossley-Holland's *The Seeing Stone*, Margaret Mahy's *Twenty-four Hours*, Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses*, and Siobhan Parkinson's wonderfully

titled *Four Kids, Three Cats, Two Cows, One Witch* (maybe).

In a stunning organisational coup, the committee of Children's Books in Ireland has arranged for the St Patrick Day celebrations, postponed owing to foot and mouth, to be held this very weekend. (It can't, surely, be a coincidence?) This means that green bunting decks the streets, the pubs are full of roisterers, and a firework display to lift the heart is held on the Liffy. I walk down to watch it with Malorie Blackman.

**"I'm a sucker
for fireworks..."**

"I'm a sucker for fireworks," I say.
"Me too," she says, and we gasp with pleasure at every gorgeous sunburst.

The next day, our final session ends just in time for us to see the St Patrick Day parade, which has wound its way round the streets of Dublin to end near the Writer's Museum. I watch it with Kevin and Linda Crossley-Holland, and we puzzle over the iconography: Egyptian hieroglyphics, lion costumes, cheerleaders in pompoms and steel bands jostle for space on the same float. It's a fitting finale, somehow, to a weekend which has encompassed the stories of Old Ireland, the mysteries of King Arthur and the glories of Ethiopian folktales, as well as the exciting modern work of Philip Ridley, Malorie Blackman, Siobhan Parkinson, Malachy Doyle, Patrick Ryan, Kevin Crossley-Holland and Margaret Mahy, my fellow New Zealander, who had tipped her trilby hat at me, and shown me her skull tattoo.

Reports

Queen's Anniversary Prize awarded to National Centre for Research in Children's Literature at Roehampton

The University of Surrey Roehampton has been awarded the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize for higher and further education for its research into children's literature. The National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (NCRCL), which is based at the University in south west London, won the award in recognition of its wide ranging work to raise the profile of Children's Literature as an academic discipline. Viscount Younger of Leckie announced the award in November at a reception at St. James's Palace. The Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education recognise the outstanding contribution that our universities and colleges make to the social, intellectual, cultural and economic life of the UK. A select few across the UK are chosen for the prizes biennially, which are awarded within the national honours system.

Established in 1991 at (the then) Roehampton Institute, the NCRCL is now a thriving centre of teaching and research, providing research opportunities for groups including scholars, teachers, librarians, historians, sociologists and publishers. The Centre runs undergraduate and postgraduate programmes attracting students from around the world. Professor Kim Reynolds, Director of the NCRCL, commented on the award by saying: 'We are particularly pleased to receive this award because it recognises the important role children's literature plays in our national life, culture and heritage. Appreciation of aesthetic elements of design, illustration and literary excellence, and of its visions of past and future, is too often neglected. It feels as if Cinderella has finally come to the ball.'

(Continued on page 7)

Reading Pictures

International Symposium at Homerton, September 2000

by Pat Pinsent

Attending an international conference on the scale of this year's at Homerton certainly conveys a feeling of confidence that the academic study of children's picture books and illustrated texts has truly 'arrived'! About 360 people participated, many delegates coming from Australia, Japan, the United States, and other distant places, as well as a substantial representation from universities and schools in this country. We were made comfortable by excellent accommodation and food, and cheered by frequent wine receptions and lauches, so the atmosphere was cordial yet intellectually bracing.

Since the three and a half days provided no fewer than eight sessions where there was a choice between six sets of three papers, plus two artist presentations, everyone will have had a different experience of the symposium. Mine included chairing a very stimulating discussion about the illustration of the past for children, debating the presentation of grandparents and fathers, and exploring such issues as narrative perspectives, animal adaptations, and the presentation of belief in illustrated texts. I could just as easily have chosen picturing poetry, psychoanalysing childhood, reading TV texts, or European perspectives—and many more.

The plenary sessions started well, with Victor Watson's paper on Tintin, in which he outlined some of the development of visual texts, and showed how Herge employed a number of techniques to alert his audience to movement and emotion; Victor also succeeded in enlarging our vocabulary by expressions such as 'plewds', 'agitrons', 'gawlicks' and 'spurls'. Later that day we enjoyed hearing Quentin Blake talking about his art, before we progressed to the fascinating and extensive exhibition of contemporary

children's illustrators at the Fitzwilliam museum (with wine).

Clare Bradford's paper the next morning about aboriginal picture books certainly broke new ground for me, and I suspect many others; the importance of the communal nature of the art, and the suggestion that there was a 'correct' way of reading it, showed us how different the conventions were from those with which we are accustomed. Later on the Saturday, Shirley Hughes led us through her long and illustrious career, and Jane Doonan introduced us to the work of two innovative author-illustrators, Sara Fanelli and Bruce Ingman.

Sunday started with Maria Nikolajeva's contribution to the extension of the critical discourse on children's picture books, while later in the day, Anthony Browne traced his own development through the extensive series of books which he has written and illustrated. Shirley Brice Heath's talk on 'Minds, Brains and Pictures' made use of recent neurological research which shows how dependent our reading of pictures is on our stored memory; she concluded that the emphasis which educators and parents place on visual texts for young children is well supported by our growing knowledge of the physiology of the brain. The final day began with a talk by Gunther Kress in which he illustrated the differences in the communication made by word and by image, and stressed the importance of cultural background in the interpretation of image. Margaret Meek Spencer gathered up some of the threads of the conference in the final session, where she expressed the gratitude which we all felt to the organisers of this stimulating and very rich symposium.

Queen's Prize (continued)

Past research by the Centre has included studies of the reading habits of children between the ages of 4 - 16 involving nearly 9000 young people. This provided a snapshot not only of what they read but how this affects their attitudes to a range of issues including crime and sexuality. Other initiatives include contributing to creation of the Children's Laureate—a position held at that time by illustrator Quentin Blake—and the launch of the British Section of the International Board on Books for Young People, which promotes children's access to good books and reading. In 2001, the Centre will participate in the Festival of Japan by mounting a touring exhibition of original illustrations for Japanese picture books.

The prize winners received a Gold Medal and an illuminated Prize Certificate, presented by the Queen at an honours ceremony in Buckingham Palace on 15th February. They were further honoured at a Celebration Banquet held at Guildhall, City of London, on 14th February. The Prizes scheme was set up in 1993 by the Royal Anniversary Trust with the consent of the Queen and the approval of the Prime Minister and all political parties. Prizes have been awarded biennially since 1994. Universities and colleges across the UK were invited last year to make an entry for the year 2000 prizes of any subject or project in which they were currently engaged, which demonstrated outstanding achievement by the institution. Following assessment the final selection was made by the Royal Anniversary Trust through its Awards Council chaired by Viscount Younger of Leckie.

[This account has been slightly adapted from a Press release issued in November]

Reports

Queen's
Anniversary Prize

Other Children's Literature Occasions

by Pat Pinsent

The fiftieth anniversary of the publication of C.S.Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was commemorated in a conference held at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood on December 15th 2000. U.C.Knoepfmacher opened the proceedings with a paper which drew attention to some of the affinities between Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* and some aspects of the Narnia books, especially *The Magician's Nephew*. The parallel between Sara's attic and the one in which Uncle Andrew functions served as a prelude to the slightly surprising suggestion that the role of the magician was analogous to that of Lewis himself, as both the author and his character needed to find a way of sending children to a magical world. Later in the afternoon there were two further plenary talks. Alan Read looked closely at children acting as animals in a school play as a basis for a discussion of the conclusion that anthropomorphism is an inevitable element of human portrayals of animals in literature and drama, and that our fear of animals is to some extent a fear of kinship.

Brian Sibley looked at how Pauline Baynes' illustrations of the Narnia books have influenced the subsequent adaptations of the books. He concluded with the observation that Lewis didn't know everything about Narnia when he wrote the first book—he needed to discover it as he went along. Between the two sets of workshops which were offered, there was a 'Narnian High Tea' which I'm sure was a major attraction for many of the participants (and warmed up a rather chilly afternoon!).

A rather less academic celebration of the Lewis half-centenary was the performance at the Sadlers Wells Theatre of a dramatisation of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; adult aficionados of children's literature found themselves submerged in waves of school children, evidencing that support for Lewis's work has not quite vanished to the combined forces of competition from Joanne Rowling and fulmination from Philip Pullman. The adaptation combined a high degree of fidelity to the text with employment of spectacle in a way that recalled the National Theatre's

production of the *Mysteries* back in the 1980s, raising the thought that maybe this kind of affinity arises naturally from the nature of both subject matter and implied original audience.

Delegates to the Conference in April at the University of Reading, 'National and Social Identity in Children's Literature and Media' were fore-armed with readings on the subject to ensure contextualisation of the many presentations of a variety of themes, ranging from Disney, Cinderella and Pinocchio to World War II, Post-Colonialism and AIDS. The first plenary by a single speaker was given by Margaret Meek, who posed a number of questions about both children's literature and national identity. She warned her audience against the danger of taking the 'obvious' for granted, querying whether adults and children are conscious of the same things when they look at children's books. She contended that literature can help children towards the notion of what it would be like to be someone with a different cultural or national background. Pokemon material provided material for both of the remaining plenary speakers, Jean Perrot and David Buckingham. While Perrot additionally looked at a wide range of other texts in his examination of what he termed 'Baroque' elements in children's fantasy and picture books, Buckingham focused on the production, text and audience of the Pokemon industry itself. He posed questions about the positive and negative effects of this kind of popular craze, debating whether it leads to on the one hand to a common global culture or on the other to bland homogeneity. His talk culminated in the provocative suggestion that it is possible that children may have more in common with children of other cultures than with their own parents.

When you consider that I have said nothing about the activities of the Children's Book History Society, the International Society for Research in Children's Literature or the Children's Book Circle, or about a host of other events, it is apparent how active the world of Children's Literature is!

Reports

<http://www.ibby.org>

Pictures within Pictures at Tate Modern

Anthony Brown supports British IBBY on International Children's Book Day 2001

by Pam Robson

On Monday April 2nd the British Section of IBBY celebrated Hans Andersen's birthday in style when 200 primary school children from London's Inner City schools took part in a whole day of gallery events and workshop sessions at Tate Modern. Anthony Browne, winner of the Hans Andersen Award for illustration in 2000, (this prestigious award is sometimes known as the 'little Nobel' prize) generously volunteered his time and resources to lead the day. Colin Grigg, organiser of the Tate's Visual Paths to Literacy Project, hosted the event and suggested the theme for the day, which was 'Pictures within Pictures'. The children's publisher Walker Books sponsored workshops which were led by four of their leading illustrators—Bob Graham, Jez Alborough, Sara Fanelli and Katharine McEwen.

Anthony Browne launched the day with a light-hearted introduction to the art of illustration and a slide show of some of his best known illustrations in the luxurious auditorium at the gallery—the children almost disappeared into the red plush seating. Anthony was warmly received and soon established a rapport with his young, enthusiastic audience. The children were enthralled as he revealed to them the polysemic nature of his illustrations. Enthused by this lively start to the day they then dispersed to take part in a carousel of gallery events and workshop sessions in the spacious education facilities of the gallery. Bob Graham won the Smarties Award for his picture book about the superhero 'Max'; he captivated his audience by sketching his familiar cartoon style character as they watched open-mouthed.

Jez Alborough's picture book 'Watch Out! Big Bro's Coming' was short-listed for the Children's award; he revealed some of the secrets of his trade to his audience by demonstrating the techniques he employs to create his cartoon style illustrations, using spreads from his most recent title 'Hug'.

Sara Fanelli's latest picture book for Walker Books is 'Dear Diary'. She enthralled and inspired her young audience with her innovative, zany style. Sara is Italian by birth. Katharine McEwen, illustrator of a number of picture books, including a poetry collection by June Crebbin called 'Cows in the Kitchen', chose to involve her audience and encouraged them to create their own illustrations. Even the youngest children became totally engrossed in their efforts, obviously inspired by her clever demonstrations of simple artistic techniques.

After lunch the day was rounded off, back in the auditorium, with a fascinating talk by the chief designer from Walker Books; then every child received a goody bag before joining the long queue for book signings and autographs. Judging by the length of the queue Anthony Browne and his fellow illustrators proved inspirational for children and adults alike. Hans Andersen's birthday was indeed celebrated in style, thanks to the generous support of Walker Books and our host, Colin Grigg.

The image shows the word "TATE" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a purple rectangular box. The box is set against a light grey background.

Picturing Literacy by Nicky Gamble

Conference organised by Film Education at the TATE modern
for teachers and educators of 7-14 year olds, 29 June 2001

Gunther Kress opened the conference with a talk entitled, From Page to Screen: changes in the landscape of communication. In this thought provoking, if academically detached, lecture, Kress used examples from text books old and new to demonstrate changing patterns in communication; a movement from the preference for text based to image based media. He urged the audience to take an enquiring rather than pessimistic view of change, posing the question, 'What can be conveyed most effectively through image and what conveyed most effectively through speech and writing?' Rather than assume that the apparent preference for visual communication is evidence of declining intellect and tendency to greater passivity, he suggested that there should be an analysis of the gains and losses of change.

Developing Readers of Picture Books was the focus for Prue Goodwin's (Reading and Language Information Centre) stimulating talk. She delighted the audience with her insightful readings and commentaries on the picture books, some familiar and some new, which she used to reveal the multi-layered meanings. We were reminded that the picture book's accessibility does not preclude challenge. On the contrary Prue's talk confirmed that picture books offer real literary experiences with the potential to change the reader's view of the world.

Delegates also had the opportunity to participate in panel discussions and workshop sessions in the TATE's galleries. Closing comments suggested a general consensus amongst the teachers present that creativity should be at the heart of the curriculum and that teachers need freedom to encourage risk-taking.

Reports

Children's Reading in India

by Swapna Dutta, New Delhi

I'd like to start with the worldwide craze that has been doing the rounds here as well. People here call it 'the Harry-hang-up'. It wasn't an instant mania the way it has been abroad. As the books appeared in shop windows, they made an impact on the lookers-on slowly but steadily. The name Harry Potter attracted notice too—so ordinary yet so special! Before long the books sold out in lots while pirate editions appeared in all kinds of places—roadside pavements, open courtyards, shop staircases. I didn't notice it until I discovered grown-ups hooked on to Harry. My architect daughter, my lawyer brother-in-law, my doctor sister, my colleagues and even

our MD!

I picked up the first book, not too sure of what I'd find, and got instantly hooked myself. I gulped the first one down and was soon queuing up for the other three! Before long one simply couldn't pick up a Sunday newspaper or a magazine which did not feature J.K. Rowling. Everyone realised how different the stories were. While the entire setting was novel and exciting, the characters—the Dursleys, the Weasleys, Malfoy, Ron—were strangely familiar. Only goes to show that readers are the same all over the world.

As the Net gets more accessible, children are taking to it like ducks to water. One reason why the children got to know about the HP books so soon was undoubtedly the Net. Ordering books on the Net isn't that common here yet, but a lot of youngsters surf to read books online—especially titles that have been out of print for years. A young niece who is crazy about classics just informed me that she has read Pollyanna, An Old-fashioned Girl and Under

the Lilacs online from one of the biblio sites. Another downloaded In the High Valley, the last book in the 'Katy' series. I too have been contributing stories and poems online to a children's website in Delhi—www.pitara.com.

Our high school students seem to be seriously inclined towards good info books. To many of them the seven volumes of Student Britannica brought out by Encyclopaedia Britannica (India) came as a real boon. It is a special edition, the first of its kind, which contains all the India-based entries from the original Britannica, revised and updated, plus a volume which has selected essays by Indian scholars on a variety of subjects.

It was released by the President of India last July and sold out completely within a couple of months.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the quiz craze on television that has come to stay: Mastermind India, Kaun banega crorepati (the Indian version of 'Who wants to be a

millionaire?'), Cadbury Quiz, and several more. As a result quiz books are really in hot demand. There are several in the market—including The Britannica Quizmaster which is a continuing series. I'd like to add that the first volume was recently in the bestsellers list.

Perhaps next time I can tell you something about what rural children are reading!

[Swapna Dutta is a children's writer, currently one of the deputy editors with Encyclopaedia Britannica (India).]

“People here call it the Harry-hang-up...”

From India

The Third Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation by Gillian Lathey

The third Marsh Award was presented by Philip Pullman in January 2001 to Betsy Rosenberg for her translation from Hebrew of David Grossman's *Duel* (Bloomsbury). It was heartening to see a slight increase in the number of entries for the prize: new titles in the World Mammoth World list, for example, have raised the profile of translated children's books. There was, too, a wider range of languages represented than in previous years, from Swedish, Norwegian and German to Hebrew and—in a delightful anthology of East European poetry (Sheep Don't Go to School, ed. Andrew Fusek Peters, various translators, Bloodaxe Books)—Polish, Czech, Albanian, Hungarian, Romanian, Latvian, Estonian, Bulgarian and Russian. Only the foolhardy would want to make any generalisations about international trends the subject matter of children's fiction from this collection.

From a children's version of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (Greg by Dirk Walbrecker, trans. Anthea Bell, Egmont Children's Books) to two titles dominated by the aftermath of the Second World War and the Third Reich (*Duel and Dreaming in Black and White* by Reinhardt Jung, trans. Anthea Bell, Egmont Children's Books), and the story of a girl who loses both legs when she steps on a landmine in Mozambique (*Secrets in the Fire* Henning Mankell, trans. Anne Stuksrud, Allen and Unwin), these books challenge and surprise. Then there is the whimsy of Jostein Gaarder's *The Frog Castle* (trans. James Anderson, Orion Children's Books) and the love of an old man for an apple tree in *Hubert and the Apple Tree* by Bruno Hachler (trans. Rosemary Lanning, North-South Books).

No, this is not a list that leads to grand statements on the direction of world children's literature—but rather to wonder at its diversity. The difference to be found in these translated books and its significance in children's lives was the subject of spellbinding speeches by both Philip Pullman and Betsy Rosenberg at the presentation party.

Recent Books about Children's Literature

by Pat Pinsent

Once upon a time, most of the books about children's literature, other than histories, tended to be nostalgic accounts of what their authors had enjoyed in their own childhoods. Today we are blessed with a wide range of books which explore both the past and the present of the discipline in an informed and scholarly way. Two recent collections by Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature* (2001), in the Blackwell Guides to Literature series, and *Children's Literature: An Anthology 1801-1902* (2001) also published by Blackwell, have already proved very valuable to students of the subject. The first has sections on 'Matters of History', thirty-eight well-known writers, thirty-two key texts or series and a number of important topics, from censorship to war; each short article is followed by a bibliography. As with the anthology, it is easy to cavil at certain omissions—such as Catherine Sinclair who merits only a couple of lines, but books like these should be seen as starting points for research rather than its completion. I do wish, however, that Peter Hunt could think of some more distinctive titles for his books rather than naming nearly all of them *Children's Literature*, with or without a secondary title!

Two books with much more clearly defined areas of focus are *Representations of Childhood Death*, edited by Gillian Avery and Kim Reynolds (Macmillan, 2000) and *Frightening Fiction* (Continuum, 2001), by Kim Reynolds, Kevin McCarron and Geraldine Brennan. Naturally, literature for children is far from being the only medium explored in the first of these studies, which is enriched with a number of fascinating illustrations; together with the text these illuminate for the reader many passages in Victorian fiction. The second book gives particular attention to the 'Point Horror' series and to the work of Robert Westall, but also offers helpful critical perspectives on the horror phenomenon generally, and the work of several recent authors, including David Almond. The same series, 'Contemporary Classics of Children's Literature', includes several other works discussing

recent children's books: P.Hunt & M.Kebz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*, K.Agnew & G.Fox, *Children at War*, J.Eccleshare, *A Study of the Harry Potter Novels*, and N.Tucker & N.Gamble, *Family Fictions*.

Adrienne Gavin and Christopher Routledge are the editors of *Mystery in Children's Literature: From the Rational to the Supernatural* (Palgrave, 2001), a collection which includes studies of Enid Blyton, Philippa Pearce, Louise Fitzhugh, Margaret Mahy, the 'Nancy Drew' mysteries and many others, while not forgetting the inescapable Harry Potter. Blyton receives her own full-length study by David Rudd, in *Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children's Literature* (Macmillan, 2000). The mention of Blyton and Rowling makes a link to our own IBBY collection, *Pop Fiction* (NCRCL, 2000), which examines a range of popular texts, several of them in what are generally regarded as rather ephemeral media, such as comics.

A new book by Anne Merrick whose first novel *Someone Came Knocking* was nominated for the IBBY Honour List in 1996 has recently been published by Spindlewood. The new title is *The Snow Globe* (£4.99 0907349455). Spindlewood has also just issued a paperback of Els de Groen's *No Roof in Bosnia* (£4.99 0907349226) for which Patricia Crampton was nominated to the IBBY Honour List in 1998 for her translation from the original Dutch.

Finally, those concerned with educating children about authors who have written for them should be interested in two small books by Verna Wilkins, designed for young readers and published by Tamarind: *Benjamin Zephaniah* (1999) and *Malorie Blackman* (2000). Part of the 'Black Profiles' series, they provide an admirable example of how to encourage children to take an interest in questions such as how books are written and published.

New Books
on Children's
Literature

British IBBY Newsletter • September 2001

Pat Pinsent, editor • Elisa Oreglia, design and layout

Thanks to Macmillan for helping us with the cost of this issue.

Please send any material for the next issue to:
Pat Pinsent, 23 Burcott Road, Purley CR8 4AD

CALENDAR & EVENTS

Saturday 10th November, 2001, at Roehampton, University of Surrey **8TH ANNUAL BRITISH IBBY/MA CONFERENCE - Book now to be sure of a place!**

Topic: Fairy Tales through the ages

Venue: Froebel College, Roehampton University of Surrey

Speakers include Jack Zipes, Anne Fine and Adele Geras, together with a large choice of workshops on a variety of subjects.

Cost: £42 (IBBY members £32; concessions £20)

For details and a booking form contact Maureen Murdock, NCRCL, Digby Stuart College, Roehampton University of Surrey, SW15 5PH; ncrcl@roehampton.ac.uk

December 1st, 2001 - 9.30-17, at Goldsmith's, London **MULTILINGUALISM CONFERENCE**

Keynote speakers: Viv Edwards (University of Reading), Roxy Harris (King's College London) Tina Hickey (Dublin) Mona Wilson (Strathclyde University) Sarah Horrocks (Lambeth).

Workshops. £50 waged, £20 concessions, including lunch and wine reception.

Send details and cheque to Goldsmiths College, Jenni Harris, Dept of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths' College, New Cross, London, SE14 6NW (020 7919 7300; fax 020 7919 7313; e-mail pmi@gold.ac.uk)

7th, 8th & 9th January, 2002, University of Reading **CHILDREN'S FANTASY FICTION: Debates for the Twenty-First Century**

Venue: Bulmershe College, University of Reading.

Contact Helen Briscoe, MCCA, Liverpool John Moores University, Dean Walters Building, St James Rd, Liverpool, L1 7BR for details.

22nd-25th May, 2001, in Leuven, Belgium **RELIGION, CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH LITERATURE AND MODERNITY IN EUROPE, 1750-2000**

Themes include Religion and Literature; Religious Publishing Houses; Use, Distribution and Control of Children's Religious Literature; Authors, Illustrators and Genres.

Contact patricia.quaghebeur@kadoc.kuleuven.ac.be Further information available from PatPinsent@aol.com.

EUROPEAN PICTURE BOOK COLLECTION (EPBC)

This comprises 20 European picture books with minimal texts in the language of origin — at least one book from each of the member states of the EU, together with a cassette containing each story in the original language and a teachers' resource file with translations into English and activities for use in school. Penni Cotton's book, *Picture Books sans Frontieres* is available from Trentham Books, and the project is now the subject of a twenty minute video, which follows three teachers in a French primary school in London as they use the EPBC. Contact NCRCL@roehampton.ac.uk for further information.

E-MAIL DISCUSSION LIST

Have you yet joined this lively and controversial forum for discussing children's literature? To do so, go to <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/children-literature-uk.html>, type in your e-mail address and name, and click the join button. Then you will have a chance to read and contribute to on-line discussion about topics ranging from young adult fiction, book illustration, forthcoming conferences, favourite childhood reading, etc. etc.

DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

University of Surrey Roehampton now run Distance Learning courses in Children's Literature at two different levels.

The Introductory Certificate in Contemporary Children's Literature is intended for people with no previous qualifications in the subject, and is thus open to those who have not previously experienced Higher Education. It consists of three term length modules: Books to be Shared by Adults and Children (i.e. picture books and fairy tales); Books for Young Readers; and Books for Adolescents and Young Adults. Course material is supplied in hard copy format, but e-mail access is normally required in order to facilitate interaction between students. Tutorial support is provided at various points in the course, and the assignments are largely of a practical nature.

MA in Children's Literature is open to graduates or equivalent with some relevant knowledge in the area. The Distance Learning mode of this course consists of some of the most popular modules of the MA as taught on campus: Critical and Theoretical Perspectives; Visual Texts; Origins and Developments of Children's Literature; Children's Literature from 1900-1960; Children's Literature from 1960 to the Present Day; Research Enquiry; Research Methods; Dissertation. Modules can also be taken singly by Associate students; alternatively, the first six of those listed can be taken to complete a Graduate Diploma, or three of those six for a Graduate Certificate. The part-time MA is normally completed in two to four years. Tutorial support is available throughout. For information, contact NCRCL as above.

For information, contact the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, Digby Stuart College, University of Surrey Roehampton, Roehampton Lane, SW15 5PH; NCRCL@roehampton.ac.uk.