

## Graphic Novels

This edition of *IBBYLink* has the theme of 'graphic novels', a term which Philip Pullman, in one of the most illuminating essays on this subject<sup>1</sup>, cites as having first been used in 1978. He goes on to define the genre:

Essentially graphic novels consist of a story told in successive pictures, with the addition of words set into the pictures: words of particular kinds, each kind indicated by its own smaller frame. These are speech balloons, think bubbles, captions, and sound effects... (p.112)

Later in his chapter he discusses, among other topics, *Rupert*, *Eagle*, Raymond Briggs, and the classic of the form, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1987).

The articles by Noga Applebaum and Tomm Moore in this issue indicate some of the directions in which the British and Irish graphic novel has progressed since Pullman wrote, notably by extending its audience to include a wider spectrum of the population. Mel Gibson's discussion of the influential Japanese form of graphic novel, manga, demonstrates the fascination that many British young people have with all aspects of a culture that seems exotic to them.

Much of the increased awareness today of visual literacy, and of newer modes of storytelling, results from the creative possibilities opened up by computer technology and improved intercommunications. Visual narrative has become increasingly sophisticated. Many of us were brought up to judge books composed only of words as superior to media employing pictures, icons, speech bubbles and all the impedimenta of what we saw as the culturally inferior mode of the comic. We need to reassess this and to look with an unbiased eye at the diversity of literacy today. The reading strategies demanded by comics and graphic novels are indeed somewhat different from those which we were brought up to respect more highly,

but these forms are no less demanding, while being in some ways more attuned to the demands of the present age. Having myself had relatively little exposure to comics when I was young (I was more interested in reading very long novels!), I find that graphic novels present a challenge. Although I am always likely to prefer the familiar printed word as an easier 'read', I have an increased respect for those whose interests, and reading skills, are different from mine.

I hope that some of the texts mentioned here will open the eyes of other readers to the possibilities of this rapidly growing genre.

### Pat Pinsent

1 'Picture Stories and Graphic Novels' in K.Reynolds and N.Tucker (ed.), *Children's Book Publishing in Britain since 1945*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1998

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## Coming of Age in Comics and Graphic Novels

Noga Applebaum

In a brief paper reviewing two studies focusing on children's interest in comics, Millard and Marsh point out that, 'Of all the forms of popular culture with which children engage, it is perhaps the comic which has attracted the strongest opprobrium, receiving not only the severest criticism but also repeated calls for censorship, even at times outright banning' (2001, 25). It seems that adults, especially teachers, perceive comics as an inferior form of literature, not only because of the misconception that comics are lurid and vulgar, packed with sensationalism, violent images and gendered stereotypes, but also because the combination of text and images is considered appropriate for the first stages of literacy, and thus a teenager reading comics is deemed semi-literate or simply a lazy reader. Millard and Marsh find that, 'In many people's minds there remains a rather simplistic correlation between "looking at pictures" and a deficiency in literacy, as it is frequently assumed that only those who are unable to read the words have a need for illustration' (27).

However, in the introduction to a fascinating anthology dedicated to demonstrating that comics and graphic novels can and should be taught within the education system, Steven Heller declares that comics to be a sophisticated art form, demanding 'an intricate weaving of tales into concise multi-perspective narratives' (Dooley and Heller 2005, xiii). Indeed Scott McCloud's critical exploration into the nature and vocabulary of comics clearly illustrates that this art form is highly interactive; it allows the reader a greater role in deciphering the narrative, since much of it is found in what is termed 'the gutter', the blank space between the panels (McCloud 1994, 60-69). Moreover, the interdependent relationship between text and image requires a high level of visual literacy (152-161).

When discussing comics read by young people, many of us have in mind thin booklets following the adventures of superheroes, humorous series such as those in *Beano* or *Dandy* or, for the better informed, Japanese manga. While such comics are undeniably popular reading choices of many children and

young adults, a more subversive branch of comic art, often referred to as 'comix' has steadily risen in popularity over the last decade and has much to offer the teenage reader. Although many comix are aimed at adults, a surprising number of graphic novels of this kind engage with the theme of coming of age, revolving around teenage characters and relating their experiences in a sensitive and perceptive manner that may well appeal to young adults. The fact that these graphic novels are not published within the children's publishing market allows them to confront issues such as death, religion, abuse and sex in an honest and direct manner, free from the unwritten codes which often dictate what is considered appropriate reading material for young people.

Heller states that 'the most superlative comics art is drawn from deep dark recesses, pushed to the surface by desires to express compelling ideas through words and images that would otherwise be suppressed if the form did not exist' (Dooley and Heller, xvi). It is therefore not surprising that many of the novels depict characters who feel outsiders and are uncomfortable in the company of their peers. These young protagonists often find escape in drawing or creating comics themselves. In fact, quite a few of the novels are autobiographical accounts of the artist's own coming of age.

Here are a few examples of graphic novels which may interest young readers while opening the eyes of adults either unfamiliar with this type of comic art or dismissing it as inferior. Further examples may be found in Paul Gravett's *Graphic Novels: Stories to Change Your Life* (2005), which includes a brief review of the evolution of child and teenage characters in comics, as well as scene analysis from key texts.

*Blankets* (Thompson 2004). Do not be alarmed by the scale of this graphic novel. Although nearly 600 pages long, it is a beautifully crafted narrative which is very hard to put down. Thompson recounts his own childhood, growing up in a devout Christian home in a small town in Wisconsin. The sensitive protagonist's coming of age is plagued with reli-

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gious and personal doubts and the pain, guilt and pleasure of first love. The black and white swirls of text and illustrations are truly magnificent and create a rich and moving tale.

*I Never Liked You* (Brown 2002). This graphic novel is also an autobiographical account of the bewildering experience of growing up. Brown uses incomplete, delicate lines, small panels and wide gutters which capture the sense of isolation and confusion he experienced as a young teenager brought up by a clinically depressed mother, while struggling to establish a sense of self-identity under pressure from peers of both sexes.

*The Summer of Love* (Drechsler 2003). This novel follows Lily and her sister Pearl as they try to find their place after moving to a new neighbourhood and a new school in the late 1960s. The artist's choice of green and amber tones lends an earthy atmosphere to the narrative, which as Gravett points out 'evokes a mixture of magic and terror that seems especially vivid when we are young' (35). The frequent movement of the characters from an urban landscape into the neighbouring woods gives the novel a fairy-tale like feel as well as reflecting the negotiation that teenagers often need to make between their natural desires and the codes of normative behaviour imposed upon them by society.

*Ghost World* (Clowes 2000). This acclaimed black-humour novel was made into a film in 2001. It follows the uneasy friendship between Enid and Rebecca, two angst-filled teenage girls who spout their cynical views of the world around them, and the misfits that inhabit their world. Through fragmented episodes,

climaxing in their rivalry over the same boy, the fragility of teenage existence is fully and masterfully exposed.

*The Tale of One Bad Rat* (Talbot 1995). This novel, influenced by Beatrix Potter's work, revolves around Helen, a homeless teenager in London, who has run away from home having been sexually abused by her father for years. Helen follows the footsteps of her heroine, Potter, to the Lake District where she finally confronts her past and finds a better future. The richly colourful pallet and detailed backgrounds capture the stark contrast between the harsh streets of London and the deep and welcoming greens of the countryside, and symbolise Helen's journey towards achieving inner freedom.

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- Thompson, Craig (2004) *Blankets*, Marietta, Georgia: Top Shelf

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### The Lucy Cat Books

A series in various languages, supported by speech bubbles as a means to help young children learn everyday expressions in a foreign language. The French volume is *Lucie Chat en Ville*, by Catherine Bruzzone, illustrated by Clare Beaton, b small publishing, 2005 (ISBN 1902915151).

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The next issue of IBBYLink will be devoted to non-fiction, an important topic which can very easily be ignored by children's literature specialists. Contributions will be welcomed; send to PatPinsent@aol.com – copydate 31 July.

## Manga and Younger Readers in Britain

Some Initial Observations

*Mel Gibson (University of Northumbria)*

In recent years, the Japanese graphic genre of manga has become increasingly popular in Britain and, as is typically the case with materials using comic-strip techniques, been seen as problematic. This is despite its being championed by a number of commentators, notably Paul Gravett (2004). In particular, the enthusiasm of younger readers for the genre has resulted in some British media offering alarmist portrayals of manga, for example Owen (2004), thus forming part of a long history of assumptions about media effects and children.

This perception of manga as crude, violent and aimed solely at young audiences is simply inaccurate. Manga, like other comic-strip based creations, can be sophisticated and complex. It can address adult as well as child audiences: titles for older readers form over 43% of the market (Gravett 2004, 13). The huge number of titles, over 40% of all publishing in Japan (Gravett 2004, 13), covering a vast range of subjects from golf to fantasy to romance as well as encompassing non-fiction, serves to illustrate in a dramatic way the diversity and flexibility of which the comic-book form is capable.

The current popularity of manga in Britain is based for some on the reader's understanding of the potential of the medium, as outlined above; whilst for others it is centred on specific creators, titles and genres. This popularity has been encouraged through the promotional work of publishers like Tokyopop, by the commitment of specialist suppliers such as Gosh! and has been further developed by promotions such as Manga Mania, produced by the Reading Agency. It also derives from the work of enthusiasts in promoting and developing understanding of the form.

Although I work and research with readers of all ages and their texts (Gibson 2005; 2003), I want to focus specifically here on younger reader's engagement with manga, flagging up potential areas of interest that have emerged from my observations.

First, there is a complex understanding of manga among young people,

suggesting a commitment to it that incorporates an element of research. The fan communities and websites that have appeared, many of which have also an academic element, show a pooling of resources and knowledge across age and sector: examples are Anime, Manga, Web Essays Archive and Anime UK News.

The increase of interest in manga and anime (the animated film industry in Japan) amongst young people in Britain is partly due to the influence of certain key texts, notably 'Pokemon'. Japanese texts like this that appear in a number of media have by now become the focus of nostalgia, emphasising how young people see manga and anime as bound up with their personal, generational and cultural identity and history.

Young people's engagement, however, is not just with one aspect of Japanese culture. An event I recently took part in included not only talks about manga, but also sessions on language, traditional dress, food, film screenings (particularly of Studio Ghibli titles such as Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*, 2001) and even hairstyles, in which gel was used to create what participants thought of as a manga 'look'. Such a range of activity suggests the enthusiasm and knowledge of the young participants.

This high level of engagement is also reflected in the way that young people are producing manga. This again is a reflection of the Japanese industry, where fans often create material, sometimes shifting from fandom into professional production. Tokyopop is encouraging this form of interaction with the medium by running competitions for Western manga creators (*mangaka*). For instance, I recently worked with a group of twelve-year-old girls who were creating their own manga, identifying themselves as *otaku* (very enthusiastic, or obsessive, fans) who felt they had a role championing their favourite medium. A group like this refutes the notion of manga as appealing only to boys and so also flags up issues of gender, reading, comics and manga.

This group understood the traditions of manga for girls, having read around extensively, including histories of the medium; they were particularly enthusiastic about Natsuki Takaya's *Fruits Basket* (1999). The narratives predominantly focused on their friendships and lives, drawing on soap opera, but they sometimes created stories that had magical elements, inspired by both manga and European fantasy fiction (one of the group had a particular love of Diana Wynne Jones' novels). Developing their manga enabled the girls to explore the nature of teamwork, as well as of friendship; each of them took a distinctive role in creating comics, with the best artist and writer being praised by their peers.

A further example of the impact of manga is suggested by another encounter, over five years ago, this time with a group of male readers. In one school library, two self-forming reading groups emerged, involving pupils voluntarily staying in school after lessons had finished to discuss their books. One group, consisting entirely of girls, focused on American comics, while the other was a male group dedicated to manga. None of these young men had previously been seen as outstanding pupils, but their engagement with manga led them first into discussing texts, then into reviewing them, and subsequently putting those reviews out both on the internet and in print format. Here, then, manga had changed their perception of themselves, making them realise that they had knowledge and skills. This example, as well as showing another aspect of both community and fandom, emphasises a key aspect of manga publishing that had also been seen in the historical British comics industry: titles were demarcated as being either for boys or for girls, with different key narratives and genres. In addition, it suggests the ways in which choices in reading manga might be used as part of defining a gendered identity.

This snapshot of young people's interaction with manga flags up a number of possible areas for research. These include the sense of ownership and expertise that readers display as part of their engagement with fan communities,

particularly online. Further, some readers use manga as part of self-definition in relation to a subculture, something emphasised by, for instance, the manga/goth crossover, which also stresses notions of reading as rebellion. The prevalence of reading leading into writing activities also suggests the perception of manga as empowering. There is, further, clearly a gendered dimension. Girls have become very much a minority readership of comics (Gibson 2003), but form a much larger part of manga fandom, as my observations suggest. This use of manga as an alternative to the girls' magazine, is, I feel, significant. Finally, there were only a few readers who engaged solely with manga. Rather they exhibited an interest both in related texts and in culture; this even amounted to a desire for immersion in Japanese culture at a number of levels.

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- Pokemon, <http://www.pokemon.com/>
- Studio Ghibli, <http://www.studioghlibli.net/>
- The Reading Agency: Manga Mania  
<http://www.readingagency.org.uk/resources/>
- Tokyopop, <http://www.tokyopop.co.uk/>

## From Caricature through Comic Strip to Picture Book and Graphic Novel

*Pam Robson*

Nineteenth-century caricatures and, later, comic strips were the precursors of picture books. Many leading Victorian children's illustrators were also cartoonists. Margaret Meek<sup>1</sup> expresses surprise that educators once ignored the reading skills acquired by young readers from comics:

The classic comic demands that two interpretations be made together, of pictures and text. Balloon dialogue (and the one with wavy line for 'thinks'), inset sketches, drawing 'asides', together with the reader's impulse to keep the story going whilst taking all this in, should have alerted us sooner to the ways by which the young reader becomes both the teller and the told, what Bakhtin calls 'the dialogic imagination'.

By the early 20th century, illustrators like Ardizzone had begun to recognise the narrative potential of comic strip. Eventually, the now familiar, Herge's *Tintin* and Goscinny and Uderzo's *Asterix* gave a degree of respectability to the comic-strip technique. The clever juxtaposition of words and pictures to convey wit and irony whilst delivering a powerful narrative was to become the hallmark of the children's picture book. Many picture book illustrators continue to employ the comic-strip layout; it is a genre which has a unique flexibility.

The wordless comic-strip picture book is an extension of the comic strip and bears the influence of cinema and TV. Philippe Dupasquier, whose idols were Herge and Uderzo, describes the technique employed in the creation of his wordless comic-strip picture books. He highlights both the need to maintain a connection between one picture and the next, and the strong connection with 'movies' and how films are directed. Judith Graham<sup>2</sup> analyses the wordless comic-strip book *Up and Up* by Shirley Hughes; she concludes that the inexperienced reader has difficulty interpreting the wordless comic strip. Jeff Hynds, in *Books for Keeps*<sup>3</sup>, supports this view: 'These books are taxing, and require in their readers experience of a variety of narrative structures and techniques.' Comic-strip picture books are the precursors of graphic novels.

### Comic-strip picture books

- Tony Bradman and Philippe Dupasquier, *The Sandal* (1989) (Andersen Press, ISBN 0862648432)

This is a three-part story in comic-strip format. The reader follows the eponymous sandal from Roman times, through the present and into the future. A girl loses the sandal which eventually finds its way into a museum. A brief text, which suffices for this repetitious, simple narrative, is extended by the detailed illustrations.

- Philippe Dupasquier, *The Great Escape* (1996) (Walker, ISBN 0744547148)

This wordless comic-strip story owes much to the influence of the silent movie. An escaped prisoner is pursued by jailers, leading to an hilarious romp which ends, only to start again. A lesson in observation.

- Shirley Hughes, *Up and Up* (1979) (Red Fox, ISBN 0099922509)

A young girl's determination to fly like a bird is the theme of this wordless comic-strip paperback title, illustrated in black and white. Shirley Hughes demonstrates her superb graphic skills in this timeless classic. Detailed illustrations are action packed, leaving scope for a variety of visual interpretations. Various viewing angles are employed and both the child and the bird constantly seek to 'escape' from their frames. Dated in terms of gender roles and style, but has timeless appeal.

- Posy Simmonds, *Fred* (1987) (Red Fox, ISBN 0099264129)

This anthropomorphic comic-strip picture book, with text and speech bubbles, has universal appeal. A dream sequence is employed by the author/illustrator to tell the reader about the death and funeral of the eponymous Fred, a cat. In the cat world Fred was famous as a singer and his fellow cats give him a splendid send-off. A title for all ages.

- Martin Waddell and Philippe Dupasquier, *Going West* (1983) (Puffin, ISBN 0140504737)

This colourful comic-strip picture book is far more than an old-fashioned 'cowboys and indians' story. Events taking place on a wagon train, as it moves west in pioneering north America, are related by a small girl who keeps a journal. Violent deaths take place in battle, adversity is revealed, a child dies.

- Bob Wilson, *Stanley Bagshaw and the Mafeking Square Cheese Robbery* (1985) (Barn Owl Books, ISBN 1903015316)

This comic-strip narrative is set in the urban north of Britain in the fifties. Young Stanley goes shopping and becomes involved in a burglary. The story is told through rhyming text and speech bubbles. The first Stanley Bagshaw title was published in 1980, the last in 1995. Selected titles are to be republished by Barn Owl Books in June 2006.

### Graphic novels

- Philip Pullman, *Count Karlstein* (1991) (Corgi, ISBN 0552548855)

This is a multi-faceted title which is partly graphic, with comic strip format and speech bubbles, and partly narrative. The author makes overt reference to literature in general, drawing the young reader's attention to the power of story. This is a humorous fantasy with larger than life characters. Characters make reference to stories written long ago. It is an interactive title steeped in overt intertextuality. The eponymous wicked Count makes a pact with the Demon Huntsman.

### Graffix

The following titles are all 'graffix', published by A&C Black. They constitute a series of graphic novels in both hardback and paperback, with black and white artwork, text and speech bubbles. The series is aimed at 9–12 year olds, mainly boys. Comic strip conventions and cinematic devices are used.

- Elizabeth Laird, *The Listener* (1997) (ISBN 0713647094)

This novel uses mostly speech bubbles but has some narrative. Gavin is annoyed to miss the debut of Johnny Mason, the

football star, when he is sent to his Gran's for the weekend. Gran lives in an isolated moorland region and on his arrival he discovers her lying injured in the snow. Coincidentally his football hero lives in the only house nearby, but Gavin's pleas for help are rejected. Only the footballer's deaf sister offers to help. Aid arrives and meanwhile Gavin learns much about being deaf.

- Jim Eldridge, *Captain Hawk and the Stone of Destiny* (1997) (ISBN 0173647108)

A sci-fi graphic adventure with the eponymous violent 'hero' pitted against an even more violent and villainous warlord. Some attempt at humour but much unnecessary violence. This title seems closer to comic material than the graphic novel.

- Jeremy Strong, *Otherworld* (1997) (ISBN 97807 13647075)

Alex takes part in a virtual reality game in which he must rescue a princess. Then his new neighbours move in and he finds that the 'princess' is Tanya, a girl with a bullying mother. Her father, the creator of the game, has left. Alex defends Tanya against the school bully and against her mother. But Tanya also stands up for Alex. A excellent graphic title with speech bubbles and narrative. A discussion tool about bullying and abuse.

- Pete Johnson *The Headless Ghost* (1998) (ISBN 0173645873)

Another ghost story with a main character, Grant, who suffers severe hearing impairment. Grant is one of a group intent upon investigating the story of a headless ghost seen close to a war memorial. First Grant, then Jill and Grant together, see the ghost. Grant is able to read the lips of the uniformed figure of the airman, who is trying to warn people of an unexploded bomb. A plausible tale and a good read. Superb black and white artwork by Lucy Su. A substantial text in narrative and dialogue with speech bubbles.

- Anthony Masters, *The Haunted Surfboard* (2000) (ISBN 0173650974)

This is a scary ghost story with text and speech bubbles. The central character is Jack, a boy surfer, who sees the ghost of a surfer who has drowned. The drowned

boy's twin arrives; he is determined to succeed where his twin failed, by surfing over the dangerous Crab Rock. Jack and the boy lay the ghost to rest.

- Liam O'Donnell, *System Shock* (2001) (ISBN 0173653388)

Organised into eleven chapters with realistic black and white artwork, text and speech bubbles. The setting is 2115 AD. Daniel, Jack and Gemma are lost inside a virtual reality system that has been seriously damaged by a rogue virtual reality

character. The whole system is about to be erased. The friends must get back to Realworld. An open-ended title with lots of weird monsters and scary situations.

### Notes

- 1 Meek, M. (1988) *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn*, Stroud: Thimble Press. Reprinted 1990, pp.25.
- 2 Graham, J. *Pictures on a Page*, Sheffield: NATE. Reprinted 1995, pp.68.
- 3 Hynds, J. 'Wordless picture books', *Books for Keeps* 1990, 74, 8.

## 'Reading' Graphic Novels

*Ann Lazim*

In his recent book *Graphic Novels: Stories to Change Your Life* (Aurum Press 2005, £18.99, 18451306855), Paul Gravett lists ten 'Things to Hate about Comics'. The last of these is: 'Comics are a great way to get kids reading real books.' While acknowledging that 'comics can encourage even the most reluctant reader', he describes this statement as a 'back-handed compliment' which 'implies that comics and graphic novels are useful primers, stepping stones to literacy, but not worth reading in their own right as "real books" themselves.' Certainly, I plead guilty as a librarian to having included graphic books such as *Asterix* in collections of books for 'inexperienced' readers, reasoning that while they are not 'easy' to read in a conventional sense, they can motivate reluctant readers.

A recent article in the *Horn Book Magazine* (March/April 2006, 'Graphic Novels101. FAQ' by Robin Brenner) points out:

Not only do graphic novels entail reading in the traditional sense, they also require reading in a new way. To read a comic requires active participation in the text that is quite different from reading prose: the reader must make the connections between the images and the text and create the links between each panel and the page as a whole. This is generally referred to as 'reading between the panels', and this kind of literacy is not only new but vital in interacting with and succeeding in our multimedia world. If you've ever struggled to make the connections in reading a graphic novel while a teen reader whizzes through

it, you've experienced how different this type of literacy is.

Take *A.L.I.E.E.N.* by Lewis Trondheim (Macmillan 2006, £7.99, 1596430958) for example. I glanced superficially at this book, and read the single-page introduction which says that this seems to be 'the very first comic strip for extra-terrestrial children ever discovered on our planet.' Then I observed that it was otherwise almost wordless, except that sometimes there are speech balloons containing 'alien' language. Each episode begins with a full-page illustration and subsequent pages are set out very regularly with six frames to a page. At a quick glance, it looks as though it is a world peopled by quite cute little creatures. I passed the book to my 17-year-old son who is very conversant with visual images and has read many graphic novels. He commented that it seemed like a series of nightmares. Then I looked again more closely, and discovered that the various creatures ingest one other and commit violent acts, both deliberately and accidentally. It is a bleak world full of black humour and bright images, provoking a mixture of emotions and a range of questions for readers. I needed to teach myself, with my teenage son's help, to read this book.

*A.L.I.E.E.N.* is a title in the imprint First Second, some of which are only suitable for older teenagers, such as *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* (Macmillan 2006, £9.99, 1596431032) by Stassen, who is originally from Belgium but now lives in Rwanda. The events are contextualised



in an introduction by Alexis Siegel, the translator (from French). This is a hard-hitting story which follows the horrifying events of the mid-1990s as they happen to one Rwandan boy and the people around him.

Anyone needing an introduction to the range of graphic novels should look at Gravett's book mentioned earlier, *Graphic Novels: Stories to Change Your Life*. Readers who already know quite a lot about the genre will find new ways to approach these books. Gravett identifies 30 key titles, each of which he analyses by taking readers through the details on several carefully chosen pages. Readers can then pick up on some of the themes in that particular book by following through some of the page references at the foot of the page, and/or taking a look at four suggested titles for further reading. The interactivity doesn't end there,

as each of the chosen graphic novels is situated within a thematic chapter, which may focus on a subject or genre such as childhood, life stories, war, horror and fantasy. Among the 30 key texts are Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Raymond Briggs' *When the Wind Blows*, Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*, Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* and Posy Simmonds' *Gemma Boverly*. Gravett has chosen to include only books which are available in English; his scope however is international, as he includes translated titles such as *Epileptic* by David B. (French) and *Barefoot Gen* by Keiji Nakazawa (Japanese). That only one chapter is devoted to the topic of superheroes demonstrates the limitations of many people's belief that this is the mainstay of comic books. Gravett demonstrates the breadth of subject matter as well as the many varied styles of illustration covered by modern graphic novels.

## The Irish Graphic Novel

*Tomm Moore*

Graphic novels, books with stories presented in comic-strip form, have never formed a major part of Irish culture. Of course, one might make the case for *The Book of Kells* and other illuminated manuscripts as representations of some kind of inherent love of lavishly illustrated books in Ireland but, truth be told, while we can boast a proud literary tradition we have been left far behind by the French, Belgians and Japanese when it comes to graphic novels.

That is, until recently.

After leaving Ballyfermot Animation College in 2000, myself and some friends founded the animation, illustration and design company Cartoon Saloon. Part of our early promotion was to print full-colour flyers showing our work and send them to all the publishers we could find listed. We were delighted to be contacted by Colmán Ó Raghalaigh who is the publisher of Irish language books for young people through his company Cló Mhaigh Eo (Mayo Press). He was impressed by our flyer and told us of his plans to publish full-colour comics of Irish legends, through Irish. We were, of course, very eager to collaborate and we began work

almost immediately on the first graphic novel, *An Sclabhaí / The Slave*, a story of the early days of St. Patrick in Ireland. This was a great success but surely more work than initially anticipated, these books being extremely labour intensive to produce.

We received a Bisto Book of the Year award for *An Sclabhaí* and a place on the IBBY Honour List, and we were very proud to represent Ireland for illustration in a touring exhibition. We followed *An Sclabhaí* with *An Toraíocht*, a more ambitious project about the legendary adventures of Diarmaid and Gráinne on the run from Fionn Mac Cumhal and his Fianna. This book also won a Bisto award and was followed by *An Teachtaire*, a sequel to *An Sclabhaí* that continued the legend of St. Patrick into his adulthood. This year we are very proud to have produced the artwork for *An Tain*, the greatest of the Celtic legends. All these books have been written by Colmán Ó Raghalaigh and published by his company Cló Mhaigh Eo.

The process for producing these books is based on what is known as the 'Marvel method' pioneered by Stan Lee and Jack

Kirby for the monthly books produced by Marvel comics in the 1960s. Instead of working from a full script, we begin with an outline, written by Colmán, containing about a paragraph for each page of action. The outline would contain all the details Colmán wanted to include in the final version, notes on the staging of the scenes, plus a full description of the action on each page. At this stage the artist would begin making preparatory character designs and concept sketches. Due to the locations – our studio in Kilkenny and Colmán in Mayo in the west of Ireland – after an initial meeting face to face we would communicate

mainly by phone and email, sending images and text back and forth. Then the artist produces a dummy of the whole book, roughing out the layout and indicating speech and the placement of the text. This rough dummy can be photocopied as a blueprint for the rest of the process. This is then sent to Colmán who writes the dialogue and edits the layout, asking for changes as necessary.

It is a very collaborative process. Once the layout is finalised and the dialogue and text written, the pages are finished, either inked or redrawn in a clean final

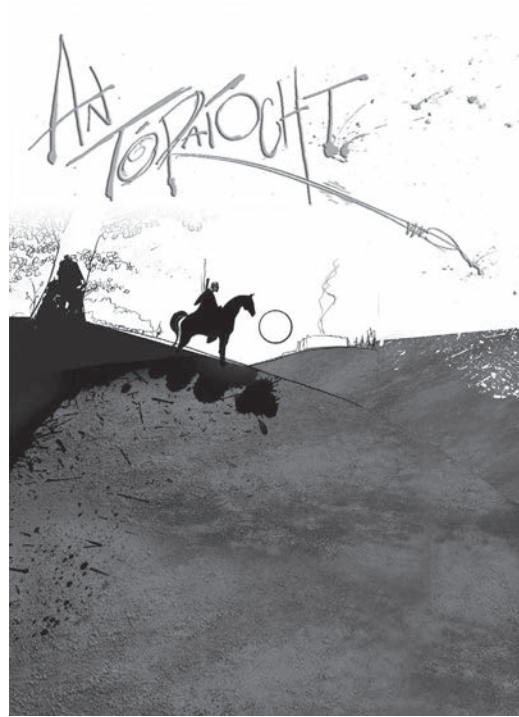


pencil line, ready to be scanned. Once in the computer they are coloured, often using hand-painted textures, to retain a handmade feel. Then finally, once the colours are approved, the text is added. The whole process can take many months and usually up to four artists.

*An Scabhai* was drawn by myself, coloured by Michael McGrath and lettered by Diane O'Reilly; Paul Young drew *An Toraiocht* and again Michael McGrath coloured it. *An Tain* was drawn by Barry Reynolds and coloured by Adrien Merigeau.

The books are published only through Irish which gives them a special role in reinvigorating these legends. Today's Irish children can experience them in their native tongue in a modern form that is relevant and accessible. The language itself has experienced a rebirth in recent years with many Irish language schools opening and the introduction of an all-Irish language television station – TG4.

The books are now available online at [www.leabhar.com](http://www.leabhar.com) and in many bookshops nationwide. At the website there are also English language translations of all the books. As a life-long comic



book fan, it is still a source of great pride for me to see our graphic novels in bookshops and in schools around the country. As well as our books, several independent comic books have been created in Ireland since 2000, creating what we hope will be a new and lively tradition in Ireland of graphic novels and comic books.

## Picture Strips, Action Dots and Subversion

A fresh 'take' on the Pinocchio story

*June Hopper*

Even if we have never looked at a graphic novel or a cartoon strip, most of us will be familiar with the devices used in them. Sequences of small, framed images which might also enclose a text within speech balloons, think bubbles or as captions, and action dots and lines as well as marks denoting sounds have been widely used in advertising, on greetings cards and posters. They sometimes appear in picture books: Quentin Blake, for instance, has appropriated them for some of his lively illustrations. But their use in a postmodern picture book gives them a fresh 'spin'. Such a picture book is Lane Smith's *Pinocchio, the Boy*, which I have only recently come across although it was first published in hardback in the UK by Puffin Books in 2002 and in paperback in 2003; it is still available through bookshops.

As postmodern picture books go, Smith's version of Carlo Collodi's story, about a wooden puppet who turns into a real boy, does not seem quite as subversive and 'way out' as the picture books which Smith produced with Jon Scieszka, such as *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Stories* (1993). This appears especially so if one has not read Collodi's original story. *Pinocchio, the Boy*, therefore, has features which could be accessible to a young audience: a storyline that is easy to follow and bright, bold pictures.

Some references, however, are aimed at the sophisticated reader/beholder, and Smith clearly has fun combining an idiosyncratic style of bold shapes and collage effects with some graphic novel/cartoon strip devices to subvert the usual picture-book conventions. First, on the title page, Smith's subtitle 'Incognito in

Collodi', which might refer to the story's appearing in another guise but most likely alludes to Smith's own status as an unknown quantity let loose in Collodi's fictional world, sets the mood for the generally subversive register of the narrative; then, on the first page, instead of the usual even-paced opening to a narrative, *Pinocchio, the Boy* begins hurriedly with the words 'Last week in a nutshell...', the three dots after this brief statement being a device much-used in cartoon strips to move the reader on. The words are written in large letters which occupy much of the page, the layout, typography and colour scheme reminiscent in style of magazines and advertising in the 1950s. An arrow and a dotted line, a device which has first appeared on the preliminary pages, hastens the reader on to the next page overleaf where the narrative begins to unfold at a cracking pace. Here, the broken line continues to lead the eye quickly through a series of small, framed pictures with brief captions which relate a truncated and modified version of Pinocchio's adventures, including the bit where his nose grows longer when he tells a lie, and deposits the reader at the point where Pinocchio is visited by the Blue Fairy. These small images feature action dots and lines, as well as marks denoting sound, which serve to speed up the pictorial narrative further as if the narrator either wants to get this storytelling business over as soon as possible or thinks that the 'best' bits of the story are yet to come. Either way, Smith is imposing the narrator's will on the audience and manipulating them while using the devices of the graphic novel/cartoon strip in a humorous way. Indeed, Smith reverts to the small, framed picture sequence whenever he wants to speed up the narrative.

Smith's tactic in *Pinocchio, the Boy* of subverting the devices of the graphic novel and cartoon strip is paralleled in his subversion of the fairy-story genre: when Pinocchio tells Hershabel, the Blue Fairy's daughter, a straight talker and an additional character in Smith's version of the story, that his father is unwell after spending a night inside a fish, she snaps, '...your other stories were hard enough to swallow, I wouldn't push it with that in-a-fish sleepover stuff.' Smith uses a few

simple marks here to convey the utter scorn on Hershabel's face and, indeed, throughout the pictorial narrative, makes clever use of the cartoon device of simplified facial features. Eyes are drawn as simple circles, eyebrows merely curved lines and mouths thin lines or simple black shapes. The expressions that these marks convey are immediately recognisable and so also contribute to the sense of a speedy narrative.

Indirectly, Smith pays homage to one well-known cartoon strip creator: among the visual references to aspects of US culture that might be recognised by the British reader but are visual diversions and not really relevant to the story, is a direction on a signpost in one of the pictures which points to 'Schulz Strip'; Charles M. Schulz was the creator of the very popular cartoon strip *Peanuts* which features the characters Charlie Brown and Snoopy the Dog. Perhaps Smith's newsprint imagery, such as the pieces of newsprint which are an integral part of the overall collage effect or which represent actual broadsheets, are allusions to those national newspapers which feature regularly a cartoon strip like *Peanuts*. Incidentally, those pieces of newsprint would have to be held up to a mirror, 'Jabberwocky' style, to read them, because they are, perversely, always printed in reverse.

And Smith pays homage to the author: the name 'Collodi', which was the pen name of Carlo Lorenzini and taken from the name of the Italian village where his mother was born, appears in one double spread on a street sign, on buildings and also as a brand name, and there is a brief biographical note, told 'straight', outlining the above details, on the back endpaper.

As I commented earlier, some of the pictorial references, as well as some of the humour, in *Pinocchio, the Boy* will be meaningless to a young audience but there is still much that such an audience can enjoy. It is a bold, bright and attractive-looking picture book and this particular Pinocchio's progress through the narrative moves along at a brisk pace, helped by all those picture strips, action dots etc towards a very happy ending.

## Graphic Novels: The Coming Genre?

*Pat Pinsent*

A recent issue of *The Bookseller* (11 November 2005) devotes several articles to the theme of graphic novels. Two of these are by Paul Gravett (see Ann Lazim's discussion of his book, elsewhere in this issue of *IBBYLink*). In 'A Fresh Look at Graphic Novels' he talks of the many companies currently launching into or extending their range, and going well on the way to fulfilling a prophecy made by the distinguished American author John Updike, as long ago as 1969, when he said, 'I see no reason why a doubly talented artist might not arise and create a comic-strip novel masterpiece.' The classic of the genre, Art Spiegelmann's *Maus* (2 parts, 1986; 1991) has proved that no subject is too serious for the graphic novel.

Gravett also dispels the idea that the audience for such texts is invariably young males. He quotes comments by Alison Ruane at HarperCollins and Kim Townsend at Foyles to the effect that the age range of purchasers is widening, and that female buyers are increasing in number. He also makes some suggestions to booksellers as to how to promote graphic novels by featuring a limited number of recommended titles and displaying the cover art. He reflects on the variety of a genre that includes not only Joe Sacco's *Palestine* and Marjane Satrapi's memoir *Persepolis* but also Osamu Tezuka's eight-volume manga biography of the Buddha. Finally he alerts readers to Posy Simmonds' *Tamara Drew* and Raymond Briggs'

forthcoming adult book, commenting: 'The fact that this year both Briggs and Posy have been elected fellows of the Royal Society of Literature is almost the ultimate accolade.'

In his shorter article, 'Literature's Mutant Sister', Gravett looks at the growing popularity of serious graphic novels, such as Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*, which deals with abuse and won the 2001 *Guardian* First Book Award. He notes the width of topics now available to adult readers of the genre, but also quotes a cautionary note from Martin Rowson, himself an adapter of major classics into the graphic form, who urges that 'comics [should] remain forever like rock 'n' roll – wild, anarchic, disreputable.'

Caroline Horn, in 'Generation X-Box Books', reports on the responses of booksellers and libraries to graphic novels, some reporting the particular success of non-fiction titles. She suggests that differences in sales between the US and the UK may result from our 'cultural attitude to children's literature'. There are also differences in the attitudes of educationalists in the two markets, but she quotes David Salariya of Book House as suggesting that there has been a growing recognition in the UK of how this format encourages reading. Horn also observes the increasing investment of publishers in the graphic genre, and reflects on the growing popularity of manga.

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### *Fearless Dave*

Bob Wilson London: Frances Lincoln, 2006 (ISBN 1845074963)

This picture book adopts some of the devices of the graphic novel, notably speech bubbles, to subvert the conventions that relate to the legendary figure of the brave knight-at-arms. Fearless Dave's apparent defeat of 'a squeaky cheese-eating dragon' wins him the princess, though readers (and the princess) are aware of Dave's fear of mice, and that it was his mother who really caught the mouse/dragon and put it back down its hole. The complexity of the narrative is increased by the framing device of a castle guide telling the heroic version of the story (written down at the time by a monkish scribe) to a group of present-day trippers, while readers also see, in parallel, 'what really happened'. There is ample scope for both humour and the development of literary and historical sophistication here.

## Launch of new Frances Lincoln Series, March 2006

The impressive range of picture books published by Frances Lincoln has now been added to by a series of books aimed at an older readership. As Janetta Otter-Barry says, 'We believe that there is a need for more stories celebrating cultural diversity at this level – contemporary stories that are not afraid to confront issues of race and culture, as well as collections of traditional stories.' To launch this series, and to illustrate that the subject of one of the books combines the Caribbean passions of cricket and calypso, an event was held at Lord's Cricket Ground. This started with a cricket match between two teams from inner-city schools, participants in the 'Chance to Shine' initiative whose aim is to rejuvenate competitive cricket in state schools. After speeches (including one by Sir Bill Morris, who obviously saw his role as General Secretary of a powerful union as slight consolation for his failure to become an international cricketer) and a reading/performance by the authors of one of the books, those present enjoyed a 'cricket tea': sandwiches, cakes, and scones with lashings of cream! A memorable occasion – may the series flourish!

- *Butter-Finger*, Bob Cattell and John Agard, illustrated by Pam Smy, £4.99, pb 1 84507 376 3, 121pp.

This is the story of Riccardo Small who longs to be a great cricketer but in spite of using a new bat from his uncle, fails to make a big score, and to make matters worse, drops the vital catch. Fortunately his skill as a creator of calypsos succeeds in encouraging his team so much that they win the cup, and Riccardo even gets a special award himself. The book is, of course, full of calypsos in the true West Indian tradition, supplied by John Agard, and to that extent succeeds in showing the strength of this key cultural tradition (first coming to the attention of the British cricketing public, of which I was an enthusiastic member, with the West Indies tour in 1949). For maximum effect, calypsos clearly demand a musical accompaniment, but perhaps a stanza of one will provide a taste of what the book has to offer, especially to those whose tradition is being celebrated in it:

Cricket, lovely cricket  
On a beach where I played it,  
Brown sand was our village green.  
The trade winds spectating the scene,  
I bet even Lord's Cricket Ground  
Don't have palm trees all around.

- *The great tug of war*, Beverley Naidoo, illustrated by Piet Grobler, £4.99, pb 1 84507 055 0, 96pp.

Beverley Naidoo is of European extraction and spent her childhood in South Africa. The eight stories in this book are her retellings of those she heard as a child. They relate the tales of Mmutla, the clever hare who plays tricks on bigger and stronger animals. Many of these stories made their way to the USA with the slaves, where the hare was transformed into Brer Rabbit.

'Mmutla waited for the rains before returning to his home valley. All the animals were so excited by the smell of the fresh red earth, the new green shoots and their brimming water-hole that they took no notice of the little hare. All except for Khudu the tortoise.' This is the evocative start to 'The Race', which will be recognised by adults as a version of the same basic story as Aesop's 'The hare and the tortoise' and Julius Lester's 'Brer Rabbit finally gets beaten'. But how was the race won? Naidoo keeps the reader in suspense until the last paragraph, 'It was indeed Khudu in front of him ... His ears tingled with the sound of chuckles, cackles, guffaws, sniggers and titters ... How was it possible for slow old Khudu to beat him?'

For those familiar with the tar baby of Brer Rabbit, Naidoo's 'tar baby' is a living object in the story 'Who shall drink?' ' "Let me go," he shouted, "or I'll hit you again!" "I don't mind, ... but NO WATER!"' The stories are exciting and propel the reader on in the desire to know the outcome. The words are simple but the language is sophisticated and so will appeal to readers of any age. This is true storytelling with

repartee and suspense, as if at a village gathering. The illustrations are eye-catching but not particularly well placed to provide reading clues. A glossary provides information about the pronunciation of the Setswana names that Naidoo has given to the inhabitants of these lovely stories.

- *Hey crazy riddle!*, Trish Cooke, illustrated by Hannah Shaw, £4.99, pb 1 84507 378 9, 64pp.

Trish Cooke was born in Yorkshire, the place to which her parents emigrated from the Caribbean island of Dominica. She retells seven of the stories that her father used to recount to her as a child. Most of the stories are told as rhymes in the irregular rhythms characteristic of Caribbean verse. The illustrations are line drawings and are interspersed among the text and show the participants at their antics, suggesting a younger age group for these stories than those in *Tug of War*.

The cover illustration is recognisable as 'Hey diddle diddle the cat and the fiddle', and is told here as 'Hey crazy riddle!' with catchy repetition (author's italics).

Hey, Daisy Fuddle,  
the cat and the fiddle,  
the cow *tried* to jump over the moon.  
But the moon was too low  
and the cow didn't know.

...  
Hey, Puppy Giggle,  
the cat and the fiddle  
the cow *almost* jumped over the moon.

A child might prefer to have each story read to him or her first as the tellings need sound effects and the phrase constructions have a Caribbean flavour:

The cat say,  
'Me owwww owwww owwww.'  
And the string on the fiddle say  
PING!

Another reason for reading these to a child first is that unless the intonation is correct, the meaning may not be clear.

Each story begins and ends with the why or how and a conclusion. 'Do you know why Dog barks? Well ... And that is why Dog barks.' Reminiscent of Kipling's *Just so stories*?

The stories certainly bring the Caribbean style of storytelling alive with a clear Caribbean voice that has a lilt and a swing.

- *Purple class and the skelington*, Sean Taylor, illustrated by Helen Bate, £4.99, pb 1 84507 377 0, 96pp.

Sean Taylor has worked for many years as a visiting author and a storyteller in schools. These stories spring from the dramas and funny things he sees going on in classrooms.

Superstition and panic can be catching, even when the pupils of Purple Class in this primary school know they are not being rational. In the story of the title, the pupils veer between joking and letting themselves believe that the model skeleton is alive. The atmosphere is finely captured by Sean Taylor's prose and dialogue. 'As he wheeled the skeleton to the front of the class all the children edged away from it. No one wanted it to touch them, and Leon said he heard it whisper something.'

The last of the four stories about Purple Class creates a similar believable effect about a school ghost. In both stories the atmosphere is restored to comfort.

The dialogue in 'The Wild Area' typifies the class members well, ' "Mr Wellington, I can't clear up the Wild Area because I've got new trainers" ... "There's nothing to worry about," says Mr Wellington. "There is," said Ivette. "Slugs." The reader is then on edge to know the outcome when the situation deteriorates as both pupils and teacher try to get themselves out of a tricky situation.

A father's pet snake is found in Jodie's swimming bag in 'Slinkypants, the crazy snake'. Chaos ensues.

There are line drawing illustrating the stories. However it is the author's words that draw the scenes in the reader's imagination and allow the reader to visualise the characters. This book is for children who are at the top of the age range for the series to read for themselves.

**Description and first review, Pat Pinsent; other three reviews, Jennifer Harding**

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*Children's Fantasy Fiction: Debates for the Twenty-first Century*

Nickianne Moody and Clare Horrocks Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University and the Association for Research in Popular Fiction, 2005. ISBN 0954982908. £12.00

The diversity of this volume of essays reflects the desire of the editors to apply sound critical standards to the kind of fiction which is likely to encourage the reading habit among young people. Their assemblage of a wide range of contributors is to be welcomed. To illustrate this, I shall look briefly at a few of the 21 articles on books and issues relevant to the topic.

If popular fiction is to be admitted to the learned canon, then a critical framework must be developed to deal with it. David Rudd of Bolton University seeks to provide such a framework for the 'Faraway Tree' series by Enid Blyton, emphasising the inconsistency with which the author treats the various lands that can be reached via the magical tree. Often the pleasures they represent overlap, while the boundary between the magical world and the world of everyday reality seems to be somewhat inconsistent. How can these apparent weaknesses be explained? Seeking to build a critical framework for these texts, it is possible to go too far. Rudd quotes the work of Alex I. Jones, who sees the tree as a phallic object and the entire series as a sexual metaphor. Blyton seems to play right into the hands of the Freudians by calling her characters Dick and Fanny. But Jones's interpretation of the work as 'a symbolic copulation' verges on the absurd. Rudd's own thesis is that the apparent inconsistencies in Blyton's text create a kind of open-weave texture in which the imagination of the child reader has a far greater scope than is the case with tighter, more cohesive texts. In short, these lacunae at the narrative level in Blyton's text resemble Iserian discontinuities at the structural level, with the same purpose – namely mobilising and liberating the imagination of the reader.

The use of fantasy in children's books is intended to widen their appeal, to make the content of books for young readers less academic and less literary. In so doing, authors inevitably build bridges to other branches of popular writing, often to texts that are designed for the general rather than the young reader. Pat Pinsent of Roehampton University discusses an example of this tendency in Peter Dickinson's *Eva*, the story of a young woman whose consciousness is transferred to the body of a young female chimpanzee called Kelly. The book tells the story of Eva/Kelly's hybrid existence, part human and part primate, while also exploring many issues of today's society, such as the threat to wild animals and the escape offered to people by the manipulated pseudo-reality of the mass media. It is astonishing that this prescient book was published as long ago as 1988, long before the advent of the so-called reality TV (which deals in carefully synthesised non-reality) and before computer-generated imagery had reached its current state of development. Eva has to struggle to strike a balance between her human awareness and her animal body and nature, and her



honesty in coming to terms with her true hybrid nature provides a hopeful note for the future in an otherwise bleak world.

Some readers have expressed the view that of the three volumes of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, the third is the least satisfactory, with a less assured narrative tone than in the first two volumes. But the science-fiction writer Andrew M. Butler goes further, arguing that the third book undermines the whole and climaxes in 'a moment of betrayal'. After a clear and perceptive account of the terrain of the trilogy, Butler shows how Lyra's separation from Will marks her joining the establishment she once fought so hard to resist. Her spirit of restless adventure and cheerful untruthfulness (she gloried in her nickname Silvertongue) are now all abandoned. Butler argues that in portraying Lyra accepting her new destiny, Pullman has betrayed the concept of fantasy, as allowing the values of our world to invade the imagined world. This challenge by the critic to the sovereignty of a writer over his material, however, surely overlooks the powerful emotional response that Pullman has generated in presenting two people from different universes falling in love. That they cannot overcome the barrier between them is not a betrayal, but an acceptance of a tragic destiny, recalling the situation of, for instance, Romeo and Juliet.

Cat Yampell of Wayne State University in Michigan launches an attack on no less a target than J.K. Rowling, accusing her of failing the test of feminist respectability, having initially hidden her female identity and then subordinating females in the 'Harry Potter' books to their male counterparts: Minerva McGonagall to Albus Dumbledore, Hermione Granger to Harry Potter, etc. Molly Weasley is restricted to a housekeeping role and overshadowed by her husband, an unambitious, eccentric but rising public official. When a crisis arises, states Yampell, the female characters in Potter always respond in a passive stance, leaving action to the men. Yampell deserves credit for a brave attempt to dent Rowling's armour, even if we must conclude that the attempt narrowly but decisively fails. For instance, Rowling has played a very interesting game with the gender positionings of the head and deputy head of Hogwarts school. Dumbledore often betrays characteristics that are traditionally allotted to female characters in fiction. He is highly emotional, somewhat impulsive and distinctly sentimental, while McGonagall in contrast has many of the typical attributes given to male characters in fiction. She is stern, sometimes even severe, rule-oriented and somewhat inflexible. If Dumbledore had been a woman and McGonagall a man, critics would rightly have accused Rowling of using characters as gender stereotypes. The reversal of gender roles here is typical of the kind of game Rowling likes to play, and that readers enjoy playing too. Yampell makes much use of somewhat selective description and comment related to the character of Hermione Granger; the unattractiveness that Yambell claims for her does not always seem well supported by the instances chosen. On balance, I would claim that the development of characters as individuals is more important in the Potter books than their status as gender representatives.

It has only been possible to look in any detail at a few of the articles in this collection, which also includes critiques of the work of a range of contemporary novelists, such as David Almond, Robert Cormier, Melvin Burgess and Susan Cooper, and some analysis of issues such as adapting children's fiction for the radio. Among the international group of contributors are Laura Tosi, Alison Waller, Charles Butler, and Alessandra Petrina; it would have been very helpful to have had a list with their institutional affiliations.

To all who have the cause of children's literature at heart, it is a welcome development that fantasy now plays a part in determining content. This is in contrast to the cosy, middle-class family environment in which too much past writing was set. Fantasy is a powerful tool for getting children to ask the serious question 'What if...?'. Despite some flaws, including some lack of stylistic clarity in the editors' introduction, this collection of essays performs a valuable function, providing a knowledgeable and critical profile of much that is now on offer, and a serious discussion about the ends that should be pursued and why.

***Divided City***

Theresa Breslin, London: Doubleday, 2005 (ISBN 0552551880)

Racism is a well-explored area for young adult literature in the UK: black versus white, English versus Asian, asylum seekers. Although we have far to go as a society in tackling the issue of tension between different communities, much has already been said and it is difficult to break new ground. *Divided City*, Theresa Breslin's latest novel, is therefore an eye-opening addition to the canon of novels for teens that seeks to highlight and bridge the differences between two of the many universes that exist within a modern city.

The premise is simple: two boys from different backgrounds develop a friendship through a shared interest. But what is original about this story is the trappings it selects: it is set in Glasgow; Graham, the central character, is Protestant; Joe, the new-found friend, is Catholic; their commonality is a love of and talent for football. Add in a young Muslim asylum seeker, Kyoul, whom they rescue after a savage attack by a mob and you have an interesting recipe for a story.

The narrative is strong and, typical for Breslin, detail rich. She creates scenes with layer upon layer of essential information; these are set against the simultaneous backgrounds of the football fan's world and of the marching season. Using the simple premise of two lads, basically good at heart and wanting to 'do right' by the adults around them and to shine in their worlds, this story weaves a precarious path through the streets and alleys of Glasgow and all of the issues contained within that city. Breslin provides fascinating insight into the divergent worlds of Scottish Catholics and Protestants and skilfully leads Graham and Joe on a path towards self-discovery and decision making that will influence the sort of adults they become. The football scenes complement perfectly the problems between the two communities and illustrate further the very basic issues that teens face, and will continue to face, as long as they choose to ignore their own wisdom and experiences.

While at times veering slightly towards overblown on the dialogue/stump speech front, Breslin faithfully presents a fascinating and thought-provoking window into an otherwise overlooked problem in modern British life, and one that must be discussed and tackled along with all of the other issues of prejudice and racism in this country today.

**Posey Furnish*****Pablo the Artist***

Satoshi Kitamura, Andersen Press, 2005, hardback £10.99. ISBN: 184270 452 4

Satoshi Kitamura's picture book *Pablo the Artist*, published in September 2005, has all the ingredients that define this artist/illustrator's work: delicate line, flat shapes, deep, rich areas of colour, and gentle humour.

Pablo the elephant attends art classes and dreams of having a painting displayed in a forthcoming exhibition, but what should he paint? He travels out into the country to seek inspiration. The ordered, cumulative nature of much of the narrative is provided by the other anthropomorphic characters who become involved in helping Pablo to produce his masterpiece, although, as the story develops, readers will discover that all is not quite as it seems.

There are vibrant green landscapes and distant vistas as well as busy populated scenes. The double-spread illustration of the pupils working at their easels at The Hoof Lane Art Club and the one which shows Pablo being 'lionised' at the exhibition later are beautifully drawn and great fun to look at. Kitamura contains his story within a neat morning-to-evening framework, and with words and images working beautifully in tandem the story is perfect for reading aloud.

**June Hopper**

Ed. Jan de Maeyer, Hans-Heino Ewers, Rita Ghesquière, Michael Manson, Pat Pinsent and Patricia Quaghebeur, 2005, Leuven: Leuven University Press. Obtainable from the University of Leuven: <http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/upers/index.php?lang=2>

Given the religious origins of much pre-twentieth-century children's literature, the opportunity offered by this publication for a cross-cultural comparison of the religious dimension to children's texts is long overdue. In May 2002, scholars from across Europe contributed to a conference on religion and children's literature organised by KADOC, an interfaculty centre devoted to research on the interaction of religion, culture and society at the University of Leuven, Belgium. Indeed, it was a KADOC project on the publishing house of Averbode, founded at a Norbertine Abbey in Belgium to counter so-called 'bad books' for children that inspired the Leuven colloquium on the challenges of modernity for religious children's literature in the post-Enlightenment period. Papers address a surprisingly broad range of publishing enterprises for children, since one response to the threat of secularisation was an extension of religion into most spheres of public life during the nineteenth century, at least across Holland, Belgium and France. The phenomenon of 'pillarisation', whereby denomination determined the foundation of schools, political organisations, sports clubs, booksellers and employee organisations, resulted in a religious slant to a variety of publications.

The volume opens with a persuasive argument by Jan De Maeyer that a consideration of the impact of modernity on religion as an interaction rather than an opposition allows for a more differentiated picture of the role of religion in children's literature. In Catholic youth literature of Flanders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for instance, the educational function was often at odds with a concern for the imaginative and aesthetic, a dichotomy that emerged not from any anti-religious movement, but from *within* religious children's publishing during the modernist period. Interdenominational struggles, too, seem to have been just as significant as any secular or modernist interrogation of traditional religious reading matter. According to De Maeyer, there was a clear separation between Catholic and Protestant practices – magazines and publications focusing on first communion at the age of seven for the Catholic child, and the award of book prizes in Sunday schools for Protestants – that reflected a battle for the child audience. Yet, as Celia Vazquez Garcia and Veljka Ruzicka Kenfel point out, in countries such as Spain children's literature *was* Catholic – there were no alternatives. And in a revealing investigation into German–Jewish children's literature that moves away from these mainstream concerns, Annegret Völpel illustrates the different priorities of a religious minority to maintain Jewish cultural identity in the face of trends towards acculturation and modernisation.

Each article adds a further piece to the jigsaw of denominational, political and cultural cross-currents in the development of religious publishing houses and religious texts for children in Austria, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Ireland and the UK. The rationale for excluding Scandinavia on the grounds of cultural difference is not however convincing.

One influential figure strides through a number of essays, that of the southern German Catholic author Christoph von Schmid, author of the sentimental moral tale *The Basket of Flowers*, which ran to many editions in translation in the UK and is often regarded as the epitome of uncompromising religious indoctrination. In fact in Germany, as Hans-Heino Ewers reports, an attack on von Schmid's work by Hamburg teacher Heinrich Wolgast, who saw it as unaesthetic and lacking in literary qualities, initiated one of the most important debates in the history of German children's literature.

Turning to the nature and variety of publications for children and responses to them, scholars address phenomena such as the Catholic 'scout' comics in the interwar period in France, with a circulation of up to three million copies; illustrated children's bibles; Spanish 'hallelujahs' (small religious pictures with a caption in rhyming couplets); and Belgian Catholic missionary tales that echoed contemporary adventure stories. All of these reflect attempts to engage young audiences with visual material and entertaining

formats. What this research signals is the sheer scale of the readership of these disparate religious texts. Sandy Brewer cites the attendance figure of seven million children at Protestant and Non-Conformist Sunday schools in the UK in 1910, with missionary heroism as a popular subject of publications read by pupils.

Beyond these explicitly Christian publications, both Protestant and Catholic authorities kept a watchful eye on children's reading material across Europe; in Flanders, The Netherlands and France, this took the form of censorious book guides and indexes of children's literature. American comics alarmed Catholic critics in France in the 1930s, just as adventure stories and detective novels did in the following decades. Condemnation of a children's text could of course come from opposing factions: it is surprising to find in a piece by Renata Lotto that the great icon of the Italian language, *Pinocchio*, was regarded as 'insubordinate' by secularists, while for Catholic authorities, despite *Pinocchio*'s inherent goodness, the book was seen as lacking 'explicit religious appeal.'

A final, informative set of papers reviews the publishing and distribution of religious children's texts from the Averbode press to Catholic publishing houses in Holland and France. Mary Cadogan's lively account of the Religious Tract Society's *Girls' Own Paper*, for example, emphasises the stiff upper lip mentality of the *GOP*'s wartime features.

But what of more recent, late twentieth-century developments? Here, and in the lack of attention paid to the development of religious diversity in western Europe in the last few decades, the volume is at its weakest. Exceptions which do mention texts published in the last thirty years are Pat Pinsent's survey of Protestant children's fiction, Rita Ghesquière's exposition of religion as a hidden undercurrent in twentieth-century children's books, and Peter Hunt's claim that although religion has been virtually silenced in mainstream children's literature since 1800, it has reclaimed a central position in the children's book debate in the work of Philip Pullman. Yet there is scant reference to Islam or to other faiths in the children's literature of a modern, multicultural Europe.

As a scholarly, historical overview this collection of papers extends and deepens knowledge of the religious dimension to children's literature in western Europe, especially for those in the UK who have not looked further than the influence of the Puritans or the Religious Tract Society. But it is left to Hans-Heino Ewers to make us look apprehensively towards the future, with his provocative designation of Christoph von Schmid as the herald of modern religious fundamentalism.

**Gillian Lathey**

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### *Peter and the Starcatchers*

Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson, London: Walker Books, 2006

*Peter and the Starcatchers* contains all the ingredients of a swashbuckling yarn: an intrepid young hero and a feisty heroine, talking porpoises, beguiling mermaids, avaricious pirates, vengeful savages, a monstrous crocodile and enough conflict to sink the creaking hull of the *Never Land*, the ship which sails towards its doom on the turbulent seas of Barry and Pearson's fast-paced adventure. Written in short chapters that cut swiftly from scene to scene, Barry and Pearson's tale lends itself to reading aloud and, on a superficial level, might simply be described as an entertaining thriller.

The most important aspect of this book, however, is announced in raised, silver letters on the dust jacket, for *Peter and the Starcatchers* promotes itself as: 'The Magical Prequel to J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*'. Apparently, the motivation behind writing a prequel originated in Pearson's desire to explain to his daughter 'exactly how a flying boy met a certain pirate', and it is in this commitment to exactitude that the prequel begins to unravel.

In choosing to explain ‘exactly how...’, Barry and Pearson proceed to iron out all the inconsistencies and ambiguities that make *Peter and Wendy* (1911) such a complex, powerful and enduring book. Their dedication to a narrative that ‘makes sense’ of *Peter and Wendy* is rooted in the narrative voice, which is detached and certain of the story it has to tell. Conversely, J.M. Barrie’s narrator has a strong, individual presence in the text; like Barrie’s Captain Hook, he is confused and contradictory, for example, claiming that he despises Mrs Darling (Barrie 1991, 208) and soon after declaring that he ‘like(s) her best’ (210). I recognise that a difference in voice is inevitable, but the narrative structure of this prequel is symptomatic of the way in which *Peter and the Starcatchers* diminishes and deadens *Peter and Wendy*, rather than contributing to and enlarging Barrie’s fictional world.

The authors rationalise every hint of magic and mystery in *Peter and Wendy* and in so doing they either try to explain the inexplicable, or ignore explanations suggested by Barrie. They introduce ‘stardust’, a potent substance that comes to earth in shooting stars, and it is the recovery of this substance on which the plot centres. Essentially, however, stardust is a reductive device that explains away mystery at every level: mermaids, fairies and talking animals all originate from stardust; it endows the power of flight; and, perhaps most significantly, over-exposure to stardust changes Peter’s physiological make-up and arrests his development. Thus, Barry and Pearson provide a *physical* explanation for Peter’s agelessness – a condition which Barrie suggests is *psychological* – and it is here that the book reveals the enormity of its departure from *Peter and Wendy*.

So grounded in rational explanation is *Peter and the Starcatchers*, that it maintains an earth-bound geography. It is possible to sail to the island which becomes Neverland; it can even be reached by the British navy. Whatever happened to Barrie’s notion that Neverland is a space created by the child’s mind, an idea which he explains in some detail (1991, 73)? Where Barrie is interested in the ‘maps of the mind’, Barry and Pearson eschew the child’s imagination and create a world in which magic is located in the authority of adult logic.

Indeed, the very idea of a prequel to J.M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy* (1911) seems preposterous, given that Barrie himself wrote a prequel of sorts in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906). In this bizarre little tale, Barrie tells how Peter Pan ‘escaped from being a human when he was seven days old’ (1991, 12); he even reveals how the infant Peter came to fly: ‘perhaps we could all fly if we were as dead confident – sure of our capacity to do it as was the bold Peter Pan that evening’ (1991, 13). Also, it is clear that Peter chose to leave his parents’ home, so it is surprising that Barry and Pearson’s Peter claims to be an orphan (2006, 435). Creating a prequel to *Peter and Wendy*, a book which has had a huge socio-cultural impact, was never going to be easy, but to ignore the conditions of Barrie’s world so consistently is to border on arrogance.

I accept that *Peter and the Starcatchers* had to depart from *Peter and Wendy* in various ways, not least because values have changed since the Edwardian period in which Barrie was writing. However, I would also argue that this ideological shift makes the notion of a prequel untenable. For example, Wendy Darling’s ‘precursor’, Molly Aster, is the spirited young heroine of a post-feminist climate and in this sense she cannot *precede* Wendy (Barrie’s mother-in-the-making). Molly’s active, central role is the result of social evolution and, therefore, Molly can only ever follow in Wendy’s footsteps. Of course, this suggests that a sequel, as opposed to a prequel, might be possible...

Barry and Pearson need to take on board that when a child asks ‘Why?’, answers are not always possible; that sometimes children should be left to ponder answers and meanings for themselves. No doubt, *Peter and Wendy* is a perplexing and strange book, but I would rather young readers were left to puzzle over its inconsistencies and mysteries than that they should be diverted from such a task by the bland explanations offered up by *Peter and the Starcatchers*.

Quotations from Barrie, J.M. (1991) *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* & *Peter and Wendy*, Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics (first published 1906 and 1911)

## *The NCC Book List of Children's Series Fiction*

Rosemary Auchmuty, Sue Biggs, Sally Phillips and Joy Wotton London, New Chalet Club, 2004. ISSN: 1366-3860

This list was published in the summer of 2004 and I have seen several reviews of it elsewhere. Although favourable on the whole, some of the reviewers seem to want to turn it into something that it was never intended to be. It was designed for collectors of children's books by a team of enthusiasts, who consulted widely with other enthusiasts and with book dealers, and intended it to be easily portable and user-friendly; in these intentions, it succeeds admirably. Card-backed with a spine and measuring 15cm × 21cm, with 76 pages, it can fit into a handbag or large pocket so that it can be easily taken on visits to second-hand bookshops and charity shops.

Given that it is published by the New Chalet Club (which celebrates and discusses the work of Elinor Brent-Dyer) and the composition of the team, it is not surprising that there may be a slight bias in favour of girls' books, but series with boy-appeal are covered too. It is not meant to be a guide to book selection; in fact many of the listed titles are out of print, but these days the internet makes it possible to track down elusive out-of-print books. There are other specialist sources of information available for those collectors who want to acquire specific editions of works – information about some relevant websites is provided.

The introduction claims that this is, as far as the compilers know, the first attempt to produce a comprehensive list of children's series fiction available in the UK; the list of resources that they have used reveals the limitations of the lists that already existed. Much of the work of checking relevant titles had to be carried out at the British Library. The parameters are clearly set out: a series is defined as three or more books about the same characters or theme. Series that started before 1900 or after 2000 are excluded, as are most picture books, stories for younger children, and books based on TV series. Some of the less famous American series have also been omitted. The editors, although they consulted widely, inevitably had to make decisions. A certain small bear from Peru lost out! Comments and suggestions are invited in the hope that there will be a second edition.

The main body of the work is arranged alphabetically by author, subdivided by series where appropriate, from Joan Aiken to Jane Yolen. The information is restricted to authors, title and date of first publication, and there is no index to titles. However the list is easy to browse and it doesn't take long to spot a familiar title or name.

As soon as I heard about this project, I felt that the list would be useful to teachers, librarians, parents and other adults interested in children's books as well as collectors.

Children are keen to find out about other titles in series that they have enjoyed, while adults often remember in great detail a book read in childhood, but can't recall the author and title, so an easily browsable list may be of help to them. I visualise students in institutions that run courses in children's literature as prime users. It is, of course, invaluable for anyone wanting to discover all the titles in a series, including series where the storyline has been carried forward by other authors: the twelve additional 'Pollyanna' books written after the original two by E.H.Porter, for example, or the two Charles Tritton follow-ups to Johanna Spyri's *Heidi*. Grandparents who enjoyed the early Arthur Ransome books in the 1930s and 40s may be delighted to find that the unfinished *Coots in the North* was eventually published in 1988, or that Gwynedd Rae's *Mary Plain* was still going strong in the 1960s.

(This book is obtainable for £6 (£5 to NCC Members) from Gill Bilski, NCC Merchandise, 4 Sheepfold Lane, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 9EL)

**Sheila Ray**

## IBBY Activities at Home and Abroad

### IBBY UK AGM

The British section of IBBY recently held its AGM at the offices of Puffin in the Strand, London. This collaboration meant that, prior to the meeting, we were able to hear from author Linzi Glass, who was visiting the UK from the USA to promote her first novel *When the Gypsies Came* (Penguin, 2006). It is a challenging and disturbing book, based on the author's experience of growing up in apartheid South Africa. In it, the narrator, Emily, describes how, in an attempt to diminish the tension between them, her parents welcome strangers to their extensive Johannesburg property, with disastrous consequences. To disclose the plot further would be to do a disservice to those who have not yet read it. In her talk at the IBBY AGM, Linzi Glass recounted how her appreciation of the wisdom of the Zulu people whom she knew in her childhood and who were devalued by society, led her to write this novel. She depicts Emily as being deeply affected by the traditional stories of Buza, the old Zulu nightwatchman, revealing, as she said in her talk, that we never know who will be the person who will teach us most in life, and honouring the strength of a bond with someone very unlike oneself.

Many thanks to Adele Minchin and Katya Shipster at Puffin for organising this event with Nikki Gamble from the IBBY committee.

The new committee for 2006–2007 is (in alphabetical order) Bridget Carrington, Nadia Crandall, John Dunne, Nikki Gamble, Deborah Hallford, Jennifer Harding, Jo Hodder, Jake Hope, Neal Hoskins, Chris Kloet, Ann Lazim, Pat Pinsent and Pam Robson.

Natasha Baker, Marilyn Brocklehurst, Fiona Collins and Posey Furnish stood down from the committee, as did Laura Atkins. However, happily Laura will remain involved due to her significant role in the organisation of the November conference.

Nikki has been very active in arranging IBBY events and several are being planned for the months ahead. One has already taken place, thanks to a collaboration with Alyx Price at Scholastic Children's Books. IBBY members were invited to hear two new teenage authors talking about their work. Randa Abdel-Fattah describes herself as an 'Australian-born Muslim-Palestinian-Egyptian choc-a-holic.' Her novel *Does My Head Look Big in This?* dispels a lot of myths about Muslim girls and the wearing of the hijab, and manages to combine humour and heartache. This and Ally Kennen's book *Beast* launch the new imprint Marion Lloyd Books.

The British section of IBBY has tended to be rather London-centric and some future events will be outside the capital. If you have ideas about organising an event in your part of the country, whether for adults or for children, contact Nikki at [nhgamble@aol.com](mailto:nhgamble@aol.com).

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### Congresses

The next IBBY congress will be in China from the 20–24 September 2006. It was originally planned that the congress would be in Beijing. However, circumstances beyond the control of the Chinese section of IBBY have meant that the venue has had to be changed to Macau. The original programme will still take place as planned in this new location. For further information and to register, visit [www.cbby.org](http://www.cbby.org).

The 2008 congress will be in Copenhagen, Denmark, 6–10 September. See [www.ibby2008.dk](http://www.ibby2008.dk) where more information will be added as it becomes available.

In 2010, the location will be Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

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## Hans Christian Andersen Awards

The announcement of the winners of the 2006 Hans Christian Andersen Awards was made at the Bologna Book Fair at the end of March. The awards will be presented to the winners at the opening ceremony of IBBY's Congress in Macau, China, on 20 September 2006. Margaret Mahy from New Zealand won the author award. This writer needs no introduction to British readers, who will be aware of the breadth of her work, ranging from picture books such as *The Man Whose Mother Was a Pirate* (Puffin) and the recent *Down the Back of the Chair* (Frances Lincoln) to the Carnegie Medal winning novels *The Haunting* (Puffin) and *The Changeover* (Collins), taking in many younger, often humorous novels and short stories, along the way. The jury particularly noted how Mahy's language is 'rich in poetic imagery, magic, and supernatural elements', and recognised her achievements in providing 'a vast, numinous, but intensely personal metaphorical arena for the expression and experience of childhood and adolescence'.

Margaret Mahy was selected from 26 authors nominated for the award. The UK nominee Philip Pullman was included in the final shortlist, along with Jon Ewo (Norway), Peter Härtling (Germany), Toon Tellegen (Netherlands) and Eugene Trivizas (Greece).

Wolf Erlbruch from Germany won the illustrator award. Despite his very popular appearance at the Goethe-Institut in London a couple of years ago, the only book of his currently available in the UK is *The Story of the Little Mole Who Knew It Was None of his Business* (Chrysalis). Hopefully this win will lead to his work getting a wider audience in this country. The jury described Wolf Erlbruch as 'one of the great innovators and experimenters of contemporary children's book illustration ... always playful, humorous, and philosophical'.

The other finalists were Lilian Brøgger (Denmark), Etienne Delessert (Switzerland), Isol Misenta (Argentina), Grégoire Solotareff (France) and Klaas Verplancke (Belgium). Our nominee David McKee did not make the finalists. However, anyone who attended the session in the Illustrators' Café in which both he and our previous nominee Tony Ross were in conversation with their publisher Klaus Flugge, would realise how well loved both illustrators are by all who attend the Bologna Book Fair.

Names of all the nominees are listed in the Autumn 2005 issue of *IBBYLink*. To find out more about all the nominees, take out a subscription to the IBBY journal *Bookbird*. This comes out four times a year and the issue which comes out at the time of the biennial congress celebrates all those nominated and is a valuable reference source. This year the issue which precedes the congress will be a special issue about Chinese children's literature, about which it is usually difficult to find material available in English. Subscription details can be found on [www.ibby.org](http://www.ibby.org).

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## 2006 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award

The IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award, initiated by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and sponsored by the Japanese newspaper company the Asahi Shimbun, is presented to projects run by groups or institutions that are judged to be making a lasting contribution to reading promotion for children and young people. Previously the award was given annually; however, as of 2006, the award will be presented every two years to two projects and presented to the winners at the biennial IBBY congress. All the nominated projects targeted children who live in disadvantageous circumstances with no or little access to books. The winning projects, announced at the Bologna Book Fair, are **The Mongolian Children's Mobile Library Project** and **The Foundation ABCXXI-Emotional Health Program: All of Poland Reads to Kids**.

The well-known Mongolian writer Jambyn Dashdondog established the Mongolian Children's Mobile Library Project in 2002 with the help of many volunteers including students, writers and artists, as well as his own family. The project focuses on the pro-



motion of book reading among children in rural areas throughout Mongolia, and is specifically aimed at the young people of the nomadic groups of herders who live in the remote areas of Mongolia. The mobile libraries are transported not only by bus across the vast steppes, but also by camel! The first books used in the libraries were picture books, selected from the best children's stories by local and international authors. After this initial selection, a campaign in Japan collected 10,000 picture books donated by Japanese children. Mongolian students of Japanese translated the books and the translated texts were glued into the books over the Japanese texts. The project is a new initiative for this huge country and is becoming well known throughout the country.

The Polish campaign All of Poland Reads to Kids began in 2001 and is now well known all over Poland. The project is run by the Foundation 'ABCXXI-Emotional Health Program' and has strong media participation. The campaign aims at revitalising the custom of reading to children at home, in kindergartens and at school, thus encouraging the healthy emotional development of children. The direct target groups are parents, teachers, caregivers and other people working with children, as well as the media. Well-known Polish personalities participate in the campaign, inspiring adults to read to children. Although the project has its own staff members, many volunteers support them and the campaign is having beneficial results all over Poland.

The other projects nominated for the 2006 IBBY-Asahi Award were:

- Mala de leitura (Reading Suitcase), Amazon region, Brazil, proposed by IBBY Brazil;
- PROBIGUA (Proyecto Bibliothecas), Guatemala, proposed by IBBY Canada;
- Centro Chileno Nórdica de Literatura Infantil, Chile, proposed by IBBY Denmark;
- Alif Laila Book Bus Society, Lahore, Pakistan, proposed by IBBY India and supported by USBBY;
- Centre for the Cultural Development of Children (CCDC), Tehran, Iran, proposed by IBBY Iran;
- Early Readers Book Project for Aceh, Indonesia, proposed by IBBY Japan;
- Bücherbus in Nicaragua, proposed by IBBY The Netherlands and supported by IBBY Germany and IBBY Switzerland;
- Eastern and Central Reading Encouragement and Development Network (E.C.READ'N), Masterson, New Zealand, proposed by IBBY New Zealand;
- International Centre of Children and Young People's Literature, Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez, Salamanca, Spain, proposed by IBBY Spain.

The prize money of US\$10,000 for each winning project will be presented at the 30th IBBY Congress in Macau, China.

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## **New IBBY sections**

New sections have been formed recently in Nepal, Pakistan and Rwanda and a section has been re-established in Indonesia. This brings the number of national sections of IBBY to seventy.

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## The Child's Right to Become a Reader: IBBY's Books for Children Everywhere Campaign

An IBBY workshop will take place in Rwanda at the end of June, supported by the IBBY-Yamada Fund, the International Fund for Cultural Diversity of UNESCO and local publisher Ediciones Bakame. The workshop for the Enrichment of Cultural Development: Bringing Children's Books to the Classroom is designed to encourage teachers to use children's literature in the classroom. It will be attended by participants from neighbouring Burundi and Uganda as well as Rwanda itself. In addition to the workshop in Rwanda, a virtual exhibition Books for Africa: Books from Africa is being created.

These and future projects are being carried out as part of The Child's Right to Become a Reader: IBBY's Books for Children Everywhere Campaign, launched in 2005. The campaign has been made possible thanks to a generous donation from the Yamada Apiculture Centre in Japan. The company wishes to support IBBY projects that will help produce and develop a book culture for children in regions of the world that have special needs or where at present there is a lack of support.

The campaign will initially concentrate on five priority geographical areas: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central America and the Caribbean, Arabic-speaking countries, Southeast Europe and the former Soviet republics. An area on which IBBY would like to concentrate is supporting the growth of national publishing, writing, illustrating, and the use of books in schools through the development of school libraries, teachers and school librarians, especially in countries where there is an urgent need. An IBBY workshop and training programme tailored to different levels of need will be administered centrally by the IBBY Secretariat, although the major partners will be the national sections. The five elements of the programme can be summarised as:

- Books where there are no books: helping to create reading materials where there are few available, combined with storytelling, drawing and other forms of narration;
- Basic workshops: publishing, writing and illustration, using books in school and creating a library;
- Advanced workshops: publishing, writing and illustration, using books in school and creating a library, bibliotherapy and mentoring;
- Policy workshops: aimed at policy makers and others who can influence the development of reading and publishing in a country;
- Advanced opportunities for professionals: providing access to training courses for professionals who would normally be excluded because of financial restraints.

**Ann Lazim**

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### Books for younger readers

Two recent events focused on what has sometimes been perceived as a gap – books for children, particularly boys, whose reading abilities are not yet adequate for the challenge of long books in smaller print (such as Rowling's and some of Pullman's) yet are looking for gripping stories. At the Horticultural Hall in Westminster on 10 April, authors Jeremy Strong ('Fanny Witch', 'Indoor Pirates', 'Karate Princess' series, etc) and Francesca Simon ('Horrid Henry'), together with critic Nicolette Jones, confronted this issue, contending that to some extent the problem is not the shortage of such books but the extent of awareness about them. Although humour may well be a major selling point for this age group, there is also a need for adventure stories.

At Penguin a month later, three speakers tackled the question of 'selling' books today. Elizabeth Singer Hunt, whose books about Secret Agent Jack Stalwart were originally self-published, based her novels on her marketing research which revealed exactly the 'gap' mentioned above. Viviane Bassett, from Macmillan Children's Books, spoke of some of the techniques used to capture the attention of possible buyers. John Newman, however, took a different approach, in looking at the role of the Newham Bookshop in a diverse multi-ethnic community.

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## Meeting the authors

The Federation of Children's Book Groups conference, held again this year at the Paragon Hotel, Birmingham, had as usual a glittering array of children's authors. It was good to be able to listen to Frank Cottrell Boyce (*Millions*), Michelle Paver (*Wolf Brother*), Morris Gleitzman (*Once*), Melvin Burgess (*Doing It*) and lots of others, not forgetting Jacqueline Wilson, and to have the usual opportunity to collect proof copies of many forthcoming books. This, and the company of so many book-loving people from all over the country, makes these conferences a real pleasure. Next year's conference, entitled 'Crossing Frontiers', will be at Worth Abbey in Sussex – see [www.fcbg.org.uk](http://www.fcbg.org.uk) for details.

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## In the picture

Scope, the organisation involved in the rights and needs of people with cerebral palsy, has started an initiative towards a more equal portrayal of disabled people in children's literature. The ten principles which forefront their campaign can be seen on their website, [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk), or email [inthepicture@scope.org.uk](mailto:inthepicture@scope.org.uk). These include the need for disabled children simply to be 'there' in stories and pictures, being shown as just 'as ordinary – and as complex – as other children'.

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## IBBY event

Scholastic hosted a 'New Authors' evening in conjunction with IBBY on 11 May, with an opportunity to hear two writers (both in their twenties and mothers of young babies) talking about their books. Ally Kennen, a graduate of a creative writing MA at Bath, sees her first published novel, *Beast*, as pushing the boundaries of realism. Randa Abdel Fattah, 'an Australian-born, Palestinian-Egyptian, chocoholic' lawyer, has made extensive use of her own experience in writing *Does my head look big in this?* about a girl at a secular secondary school who decides to wear the hijab. The teenage protagonist's relationships with her friends, Moslem and otherwise, her strong interest in make-up as well as in a boy in her class and the contemporary colloquial language, make this a book which should do much to 'normalise' the picture of girls like Amal, in this country as well as in Australia.

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## CLPE Poetry Award

The winner of the **2006 CLPE Poetry Award** will be announced at a ceremony at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education on July 4<sup>th</sup> 2006. The following books have been shortlisted: Gerard Benson, Judith Chernaik & Cicely Herbert (eds): *The Carnival of Animals*, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura (Walker); June Crebbin: *The Crocodile is Coming!* illustrated by Mini Grey (Walker); Belinda Hollyer (ed): *She's All That! Poems about Girls*, illustrated by Susan Hellard (Kingfisher); Michael Morpurgo (ed): *Cock Crow: Poems about life in the countryside*, illustrated by Quentin Blake (Egmont); and Fiona Waters (ed): *Why does my mum always iron a crease in my jeans?* (Puffin). The judges are Valerie Bloom, Roger McGough and Tony Mitton, and the judging panel

is chaired by Margaret Meek Spencer. The award is sponsored by Mr and Mrs Pye's Charitable Foundation.

Children from two schools in Lambeth will attend the award ceremony to present the outcome of a project inspired by the CLPE Poetry Award. The children are working with poet Adisa to create their responses to poetry books considered for the Award. This project is organised by South Bank Centre Education. For further information about the award or the award ceremony please contact Ann Lazim, email: [ann@clpe.co.uk](mailto:ann@clpe.co.uk); tel: 020 7633 0840. For more information about CLPE, please see our website [www.clpe.co.uk](http://www.clpe.co.uk)

## CONFERENCES AND TALKS

### **Diversity Matters: Growing Markets in Children's Publishing**

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, 24–25 June 2006 (Saturday 24th, 10.00am–3.45pm, Sunday 25th, 10.00am–12.45pm). Keynote speakers: Malorie Blackman and Trevor Phillips. Contributing authors include: Beverley Naidoo, Mary Hoffman, Bali Rai, Ken Wilson-Max and John Agard. This major conference from Arts Council England, organised by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, provides a unique opportunity to raise the profile of the market for culturally diverse children's books and to explore opportunities for development in this area. Workshops will focus on development of the market, informing and stimulating growth, and showcasing good practice. <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversitymatters>.

### **Time Everlasting: Representations of Past, Present and Future in Children's Literature**

British IBBY/NCRCL MA Conference, 11 November 2006, Roehampton University. The theme of this year's conference will be the fictional presentation of time to young readers: looking back to the past which has shaped their present, and forward to the future which they will grow into. Keynote speakers include Celia Rees and Valerie Krips, and there will be a range of workshops, covering themes such as: historical fiction and the recent popularity of historical 'diaries'; time fantasies, time-slip and time-travel; science fiction, particularly that which engages in visions of the future; postmodern constructions of time; and experimental fiction which plays with narrative chronology. Contact Laura Atkins (National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, Froebel College, Roehampton University, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PJ; [L.Atkins@Roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:L.Atkins@Roehampton.ac.uk)) with proposals or for further information.

### **Children's Cultures: Universality and Diversity**

15–17 March 2007, Centre International des Langues, Université de Nantes, France. This conference aims to bring together researchers who seek to listen to the voices of 'the people in the playground' (Iona Opie), and the transmission of oral cultural practices among children aged four to twelve. Contributions from literary and other scholars welcome, on topics such as the universality of verbal patterns, the reflection of gender, regional or national identity, the effect of immigration or of new technologies, and the way in which the memory of particular children's cultures are preserved in adult productions, such as novels, autobiographies or films. Papers may be presented in English or French and should last no longer than 20 minutes. Proposals (title + abstract of approximately 250 words) should be sent by email to Andy Arleo ([andy.arleo@wanadoo.fr](mailto:andy.arleo@wanadoo.fr)) and Julie Delalande ([jdelande@atol.fr](mailto:jdelande@atol.fr)) by 30 September 2006.

### **Women, the Arts and Globalisation**

One day conference 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2006 at the Victoria and Albert Museum on the articulation of diasporic and migration identities. Contact Dorothy Rowe ([D.Rowe@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:D.Rowe@roehampton.ac.uk)) for further information

## **Society of Authors talks**

£8 on the door for each session (SCWBI members); £12 (non-members). Limited places available! Contact Sara Grant at [murray\\_in\\_london@hotmail.com](mailto:murray_in_london@hotmail.com) to book places.

6th July 2006, 7–9pm at 7 Medland House, Branch Road, London E14 7JT. ‘Evening with an editor’: Mara Bergman, senior commissioning editor at Walker Books.14  
September 2006, 7–9pm at the Society of Authors, 84 Drayton Gardens, London, SW10.

‘What makes a children’s book great?’ Book reviewers and teachers will talk about their ‘best reads’ in contemporary children’s fiction.

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## **JOURNALS**

### **Boyhood Studies**

This new journal is being launched to offer an interdisciplinary platform for the scholarly study of boys’ lives. It welcomes critical discussions ranging through the humanities, anthropology, history, bioethics, and the psychological and social sciences. Visit the website at <http://www.boyhoodstudies.com> or contact the Managing Editor, Diederik Janssen ([diederikjanssen@gmail.com](mailto:diederikjanssen@gmail.com)) for further details.

### **Children & Society**

As from January 2006, Blackwell Publishing has assumed publishing responsibility for this journal on behalf of the National Children’s Bureau. This is an interdisciplinary journal for research and debate on all aspects of childhood.

Visit <http://blackwell-publishing.msgfocus.com/c/15E69RxGLHyBjPgZ> for more information, including details on how to subscribe or to submit an article.

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## OTHER ITEMS

### **New website for Scottish children's books**

BRAW (books, reading and writing), the network for the Scottish Children's Book, has launched a new resource which aims to promote Scottish children's books. The BRAW website – [www.braw.org.uk](http://www.braw.org.uk) – is intended to help access information on contemporary Scottish children's authors, illustrators, and their books. It includes an efficient and easy-to-use online database which allows users to search for books by age group and theme. Its colourfully animated pages cover fiction, non-fiction and poetry, and include sections designed to cater for the varying needs of children, parents/carers and schools/libraries. There is a page dedicated to the author/illustrator of the month and downloadable bookplates, bookmarks and fun activities created by BRAW illustrators. Children are being encouraged to post reviews of their favourite books on the website, which will also offer a comprehensive guide to organising author events in schools. The BRAW initiative is a Scottish Arts Council Lotteries Fund project, and boasts high-profile Scottish children's author Joan Lingard as its patron. This year will also see the inaugural Royal Mail Awards for Scottish Children's Books, managed by BRAW in partnership with the Scottish Arts Council. Further information: [anna.gibbons@scottishbooktrust.com](mailto:anna.gibbons@scottishbooktrust.com) and [david.gaffney@beattiegroupp.com](mailto:david.gaffney@beattiegroupp.com).

### **Children's books party for Queen**

Children's books will be at the heart of a spectacular 80th-birthday garden party for the Queen this summer. The event will see the monarch mingling with 1,000 children at Buckingham Palace, as well as up to 100 characters representing the finest British children's literature. Paddington Bear, Bob the Builder, Thomas the Tank Engine, Mowgli, Winnie the Pooh, Postman Pat, the BFG and the White Rabbit are amongst the cast lined up. J.K.Rowling, Harry Potter star Daniel Radcliffe and Children's Laureate Jacqueline Wilson will also appear. The event will be televised live at 6pm on 25 June 2006.