

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

'And the grandfather clock still went on striking, as if it had lost all count of time' (*Tom's Midnight Garden*, ch. 4)

Every year, after the IBBY conference, we hear people claiming that it has been 'the best one yet', and 2006 was no exception. Whatever the truth of that claim, it is certain that it was one of the most popular. From the moment that it was advertised as having the theme of time, registrations came flooding in. Perhaps the very nature of human existence, immersed in the flow of time, together with the impossibility of coming up with a workable definition of this fourth dimension, exerts its own spell on us. Undoubtedly children's literature, ranging from fairy tales in which immeasurable aeons pass without human characters noticing, through time travel and historical fiction, to the increasing number of stories set in the distant future, reveals many instances of major works with time as a theme.

And one of the most enduring of such classics has been Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958).

In the light of subsequent events, we rejoice that the choice of the theme gave us an apposite occasion to honour Philippa as one of the classic authors of the twentieth century. The 2006 conference was one of her last public appearances before her death on 21 December 2006. When we chose the theme of time, several people (notably Ann Thwaite, who introduced the teatime celebration – marked by a cake in the shape of the clock in the novel), immediately recognised this opportunity. We are particularly grateful to Ann and to Morag Styles for facilitating Philippa's presence at Roehampton – as well as for their words in her honour. It was inspiring to see her, and to hear her reply to Ann's appreciative address, in which she modestly distanced herself from 'the young woman' who wrote the book nearly fifty

CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 3 | Encomium for Philippa Pearce <i>Ann Thwaite</i> | 15 | Discourses of History in Portuguese Children's Literature <i>Sara Reis da Silva</i> |
| 4 | Pearce Everlasting <i>Morag Styles</i> | 16 | Metafictive Picture Books <i>Arlene Hsing</i> |
| 5 | Time and Knowledge <i>Victor Watson</i> | 16 | Death in Picture Books |
| 6 | Time ... Memory ... Tense <i>Margaret Meek</i> | | <i>Maija-Liisa Harju</i> |
| 7 | Meditations on Time <i>Corinne Buckland</i> | 17 | Locating Leonardo <i>Theresa Breslin</i> |
| 8 | Once Upon a Time into Altered States | 18 | Pandora's Box <i>Linda Buckley-Archer</i> |
| | <i>Patrick Ryan</i> | 19 | Mopsa the Fairy <i>Marilyn Pemberton</i> |
| 9 | The Henge as Wormhole <i>Charles Butler</i> | 20 | Time in Pullman, Lewis and Macdonald |
| 10 | Childhood, the North-East and the Past | | <i>William Gray</i> |
| | <i>Nolan Dalrymple</i> | 21 | With Meccano to the Stars <i>Farah Mendlesohn</i> |
| 11 | Rosemary Sutcliff and the Cowboys | 22 | The Near Future in Science Fiction |
| | <i>Clive Barnes</i> | | <i>Jessica Yates</i> |
| 12 | Children's Literature and the Holocaust | 23 | What Albert Did Next <i>Alice Bell</i> |
| | <i>Rebecca R. Butler</i> | 24 | Reports |
| 13 | Anne Frank's Fictional Heiresses | 27 | Reviews |
| | <i>Rose-May Pham Dinh</i> | 33 | IBBY News |
| 14 | Dear Diary Now and Then <i>Maiko Miyoshi</i> | 34 | Conferences, Exhibitions and Events |
| 14 | Heritage in Greek Children's Literature | | |
| | <i>Marianna Spanaki</i> | | |

years ago. We are also grateful to Ann Thwaite for supplying us with a copy of the introduction to Philippa Pearce that she made at the IBBY congress in Tokyo twenty years ago, which it seems particularly appropriate to include in this issue of *IBBYLink*.

In this issue of *IBBYLink* we are fortunate enough to have short versions of most of the talks given at the conference (in most instances, a longer version will be printed in the book of the conference proceedings, to be published later in 2007 by Pied Piper Publishing). Victor Watson started things off splendidly with his masterly summary of the history of those children's books that have addressed the theme of time, concluding that authors who have written such books are 'addressing and exemplifying the fundamental nature of literature for children'. His talk was followed by Celia Rees, many of whose books have taken on board the problem of how to make children feel themselves 'present in the past'. In particular, she spoke of how in her novels she has attempted to redress the gender balance, and to 'reclaim those with no voice at all', such as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century girls.

The lively discussion between two writers who have also excelled themselves at portraying the past, Mary Hoffman and Jamila Gavin, incidentally revealed how potent can be the power of place, both of them having been won by the spell of Venice; the city features in Hoffman's *Stravaganza: City of Masks* (2002) and Gavin's *The Blood Stone* (2003). Mary Hoffman spoke of the freedom that having made up her own fantasy version of Italy had given her, though she had also carried out research, while Jamila Gavin reminded her audience of the important trade links between Europe and India which provided a foundation for her story of a jeweller from Venice who may well have designed the Taj Mahal.

As ever at IBBY conferences, publishers were in evidence, Bloomsbury honouring their historical fiction authors with a wine reception before lunch and Penguin sponsoring the reception for Philippa Pearce. Before the latter, there was a bigger than ever choice of workshops, plus an illustrated session from Theresa Breslin about the background to her recent novel featuring Leonardo da Vinci, *The Medici Seal*.

After the celebrations, Margaret Meek Spencer drew us back to the central mystery of time, and its links with memory and tense – an apt lead-in for the move from the past to the future which characterised the final sessions. Farah Mendlesohn challenged our perhaps complacent assumption as lovers of children's literature that children's books should avoid didacticism, with her plaudits for those science fiction authors whose books actually teach their young readers about the nature of the world. High on this list she acclaimed the work of our final speaker, Philip Reeve, whose quartet of books about 'traction cities' she saw as having an 'inventive and joyous' relationship with technology, as well as conveying a 'density of political information'. Reeve himself, who had a background as an illustrator before writing his own lengthy novels, succeeded in holding his audience as he answered questions from Lisa Sainsbury, a devotee of his work. He also gave tantalising glimpses of his recent book, *Larklight*, published in September 2006, which combines his interests in technology and in the past. Another novel, *Here Lies Arthur*, is due to be published in April 2007.

The current issue of *IBBYLink* also includes a number of reviews of both children's books and books about children's literature, and much other information.

Pat Pinsent

iBBYLink 18
The British IBBY
Newsletter
Spring 2007

Pat Pinsent
Editor
23 Burcott Road
Purley
CR8 4AD

Kathleen Fedouloff
Design & Layout
+353 21 485 9962

To sponsor a future issue of
IBBYLink,
please contact Pat Pinsent
PatPinsent@aol.com

Encomium for Philippa Pearce

Ann Thwaite

This is the text of the introduction that Ann Thwaite gave for Philippa Pearce at the 20th IBBY Congress on 20 August 1986 in Japan; it seems a particularly appropriate way for British IBBY to pay our respects to Philippa.

I was particularly glad when I heard Philippa Pearce had been chosen to speak at this conference in Tokyo and that I would be able to introduce her. It is lovely to have a reason to be here in Tokyo again. Tokyo means a lot to me: it was here, many years ago, indeed not so long after IBBY was founded, that I produced both my first book and my first child. And Philippa Pearce means a lot to me too, as she does to so many different people of all ages in different parts of the world. Of all the hundreds of living writers in English whose work has been translated into Japanese, she is the one whose books were most frequently mentioned to me during a recent period when I was teaching here, and I was glad to have the chance to introduce to my students at Tokyo Joshidai, in a course on children's literature, two of her novels (*Tom's Midnight Garden* and *The Battle of Bubble and Squeak*), and to look in more detail at one of her many good short stories 'In the middle of the night'. Short stories are especially suitable, I feel, for introducing good children's literature to readers who are still having some difficulty with the language in which it is written.

The test of fiction, whether for adults or children, is the quality of the experience we receive in reading it. We can trust Philippa Pearce, whatever she writes, to make that experience worth having. *Tom's Midnight Garden*, first published nearly 30 years ago, is the sort of book that makes you want to go back to the beginning as soon as you have reached the end – to read it again in the light of the end. It begins, as do so many of the best fantasies, in a totally recognisable world. Even if medical opinion has now changed and children with measles are no longer kept in strict quarantine, Tom's boredom and frustration are as real as ever. The place is real. In all her work, even in her ghost stories, Philippa Pearce is always in touch with reality, with the ordinary incidents and objects of everyday life. Her most straightforwardly realistic novel, *The Battle of Bubble and Squeak*, and the

earlier *A Dog So Small*, touch children closely because they know that that is the way life is, with the natural family tensions and affections, and the problems of communication, and of coping with their own desires in the world as it is.

In other books, Philippa Pearce may write of a world mysteriously and romantically different from any that her child readers have known, but, as she will tell us, she is always sharing a vivid memory and experience of what it is to be young. Not all children will relish all of the books, but Philippa Pearce is one of those writers whom every child should be given the chance to enjoy, with her marvellous feeling for place, for the past, for friendship, for the things that really matter in life. The books read aloud very well – reminding us that the writer was once trained in radio. When they are read aloud, the novels can be appreciated by children as young as eight or nine, who can then return to them and get more from them later; read aloud, they can be appreciated by some children who will never read well enough to read them for themselves – children we must always be concerned about.

Philippa Pearce has herself in the past described the natural growth of a story – the story developing in the mind as a tree grows from a seed – a long, slow process. Her stories seem natural and inevitable and well-nourished. There is nothing 'manufactured' about them. In a BBC talk once for children, she described the genesis of *A Dog So Small*, how it came into being. The starting point 'didn't look like a story; it looked like a person' – a boy who longed to have a dog. In her description of the growth of that story – how scenes and places came into her mind, how she had an end long before the middle or even the beginning, how patient she was, waiting for it to grow – in her own description, I could understand both why Philippa Pearce has produced so comparatively few novels (only six major books in 30 years) and why the ones she has produced are so good.

Above all, of course, Philippa Pearce is a storyteller – with a storyteller's ability to hold our attention – and I know she will hold our attention today. I can remember her once long ago in Scotland hold-

time
everlasting

ing an audience enthralled with a sweet, ridiculous story of how she had herself made a pair of trousers for her daughter's toy teddybear and had found herself, to her own surprise, worrying that he might grow out of them. There is something endearing and unpretentious about that story which is typical of her.

But I must end my introduction by reminding you that Philippa Pearce has for a long time been one of the very best writers writing for children in English. Her most recent book, *The*

Way to Sattin Shore, is as rewarding as anything she has written. Twenty years ago, John Rowe Townsend picked out *Tom's Midnight Garden* as an undoubted masterpiece. There has never been any dispute, I think, that the book deserves that description – and 'masterpiece' is not a word that anyone uses lightly. I am myself quite well acquainted with the great tradition of children's literature in English, and I am particularly delighted to have the opportunity to introduce to you now such a splendid exemplar of the tradition: Philippa Pearce.

Pearce Everlasting

The past, the present and the future in fiction by Philippa Pearce

Morag Styles

My first encounter with Pearce's fiction was the radio serialisation of *Tom's Midnight Garden* in 1971, before I read the book. My first actual meeting with Philippa was about 30 years ago, when I was a young star-struck lecturer and I blurted out stupidly that I considered her one of the three greatest children's writers of all time. 'Oh yes,' said Philippa with a quizzical eye, 'and who are the other two?'

Pearce's work is outstanding because she writes with precision, with every word, every piece of punctuation being carefully selected. She knows that fine writing takes time, and has never been tempted to rush out too much work too quickly. She is excellent at nature, weather and the landscapes of the heart. Pearce also does character better than almost anybody – and for her, character is never anything as simple as idiosyncrasy; it is always rooted in lived experience and social conditions. Another aspect of her writing is how ahead of her time she has been in her treatment of class. Pearce's central characters are often working class and never does she patronise or stereotype them as lesser writers do.

Pearce tackles powerful themes, making art out of the inchoate muddle of everyday experience which includes ordinary domestic description and light-hearted moments, as well as probing painful feelings, such as loss, longing, even obsession – all part of the human condition and strong motifs in her work. Her writing celebrates the continuity between

childhood and adulthood, the past and the present. Families are the cornerstone of this continuity and many times Pearce makes connections between parents and children, and, in their turn, the parents that the children will become.

One of the reasons Pearce's work is so good is that readers are afforded the same satisfactions of psychological realism as in the most rewarding adult fiction. Her writing explores with subtlety and conviction the powerful emotions which lesser authors either overwrite or slide over. In her characters, Pearce shows the dangers of withdrawal from the people who might help them, and how they have to learn to accept things as they are rather than as they want them to be.

It is Time, however, that is Pearce's greatest and most enduring theme. It is present from her first work to her last, and it is consistently presented in a way a child can grasp. In *Tom's Midnight Garden*, Tom yearns to stay within the safe confines of childhood and fails to notice how Hatty is changing. As we grow older and the future no longer seems a vast expanse, our desire to hold on to childhood seems to deepen; Pearce recognises the children who are still there within us all as adults.

As for the future, I confidently predict that scholars of children's literature beyond the twenty-first century will judge her work as the touchstone of deep, nourishing, timeless fiction. Pearce everlasting, I trust.

Time and Knowledge in Children's Fiction

Victor Watson

In this talk my central argument was that there is an inevitable and unique connection between time and children's fiction. This is a consequence of the fact that (with some rare exceptions) children's authors are older than their readers and know more both about reading and about life.

In previous centuries authors took advantage of their authority over their young readers to implant in their books a good deal of didacticism. But when Lewis Carroll published the two Alice books, didacticism was abandoned, and the intimacy and affection which existed between him and the young Alice Liddell was transposed into the two books in the form of an assumed intimacy with the reader. With this new narratorial stance, Lewis Carroll unselfconsciously revealed that he was very aware (perhaps troubled) by the difference in age between himself and Alice; the poem which precedes *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the two poems which frame *Through the Looking-Glass* make no attempt to conceal his preoccupation with time, memory and Alice's possible forgetfulness.

After Carroll, children's fiction developed in two directions. There grew up a kind of 'bachelor literature' which enjoyed playing with the piquancy that can be seen to arise from a grown-up's contemplation of young children. A. A. Milne's final Pooh Bear story, when Pooh and Christopher Robin say goodbye, is an illustration of this. It was almost certainly heavily influenced by J. M. Barrie's reference in *Peter Pan* to those 'magic shores' where 'children at play are for ever beaching their

coracles' – but where 'we shall land no more'. Women authors, however, did not go in for this kind of creative nostalgia. They were altogether more pragmatic and more inclined to represent children somehow coping with the realities of their lives. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, for example, is just as much concerned with time – and with the ways in which the past has to be accommodated and emotionally grasped if children are to understand their place in a meaningful continuity.

In the rest of my allotted time, I concentrated in some detail on three works – *Swallowdale* by Arthur Ransome, *The Children of Green Knowe* by Lucy Boston and *Saffie's Angel* by Hilary McKay. In each of these (briefly in the first, much more substantially in the other two), children are shown to need an understanding of their past and the cultural/familial context which has created them. Lucy Boston and Hilary McKay go further: their books show children, orphaned in spirit if not in fact, being loved and *welcomed* into their family.

Of course, thousands of books are published for children which do *not* trouble themselves with any of these matters. But in every generation there have been one or two authors who are drawn to explore this issue of time and age. Their books are – in the fullest possible sense – written *by adults for children*, to greet them and welcome them. The writers who achieve this are – whether they are conscious of it or not – addressing and exemplifying the fundamental nature of literature for children.

time
everlasting

Time ... Memory ... Tense

Margaret Meek Spencer

In offering to the IBBY conference a short paper about time in children's books, I saw an opportunity to revisit what I wrote about this subject in 1984, an article in *Signal 45* called 'Speaking of shifters'. My proposal then was that, linked as it is to their language development, children's understanding of time is greatly enhanced by their hearing and reading continuous texts, especially those written for them 'where time is the author's chosen theme'. Clearly, in real time, I now had to catch up with current research topics proposed for the conference workshops – hence the description of my contribution as 'three speculative footnotes' to the study of children's understandings about time in literature and its relation to their growth as readers.

Children hear adults mention *time* in many different contexts, including the threat of 'wasting time'. They play at 'What's the time, Mr Wolf?' Before they can read time on a clock, they recognise the pattern of chronological time in stories. By the time they go to school they use the past tense. For me, the best presentation of time in a book for children is Pat Hutchins' *Clocks and More Clocks*.

Time-slip tales are difficult to categorise. There is no single generic distinction, with the result that different kinds of 'fantasy' fiction are usually included in a list that also has books by Lucy Boston, Diana Wynne Jones and Philippa Pearce, where the characters come from different times and share a particular time together. Newer examples of time changing are in Jan Mark's *Riding Tycho* (future time) and H. M. Enzensberger's *Where Were You, Robert?* (German history).

Memory is the great organiser of consciousness. We grow into two kinds of memory about past events: those of our own lives and those of our ancestors. Young children remember what happens in stories and retell them in the mode of a virtual past. In both young

and old these recollections are usually linked with named places. Bakhtin calls this 'time space' a chronotope: 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'.

Memory has become a special concern of neurologists and thus is a subject of scientific inquiry. It may seem extravagant to link children's early memories with those of Proust, but I think we could profitably pursue a line of thought following his conviction that, 'La réalité ne se forme que dans la mémoire'.

Tense. Literary competences are built up in young readers by the diversity of discourses provided by writers. This aspect of time in children's books needs illustration over a wide range of examples instead of explanation. At the heart of the matter are the ways in which time is created from language and imagination. Stories are patterns of *shifters*: time changes. For me, the best examples are in Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden*. There are two orders of time: day time and garden time. Within the garden time, there is a different order of duration from the everyday: Hatty grows up to be a fine young lady in the course of Tom's summer holiday. She says to him: 'Sometimes you don't come back for months', but Tom knows he goes to the garden every night.

What I have said here is the merest acknowledgement of a skill with language that has established children's books in English as a genuine literature. A comparable example is the text of John Burningham's *Granpa*. Linguists attribute to verb forms in English a greater subtlety and range than is found in any other language. Be that as it may, my conviction is that the power of reading opens and upholds a comparable power of imagination in authors who choose children as their readers.

Meditations on Time in Children's Fiction

Corinne Buckland (University of New England, Australia)

Any logical analysis of time seems doomed to end in paradox, even at the most simple level. What was once deemed future, for example, may actualise and, from another reference point, become past. Literature is a way of portraying how we actually perceive time and what is more important, how we emotionally deal with it. Ricouer makes the telling distinction between narratives *of* time, and novels *about* time. While all narratives are *of* time, since they can only exist through some kind of chronological representation of time, adult novels *about* time are uncommon. In children's fiction, however, time is the thematic focus of a large number of fantasy works that encompass a diverse range of approaches. Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962) ponders time through the use of scientific, mathematical and spiritual concepts; Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* (1975) speculates on the practical consequences of individuals who slip outside or defeat time in a world that remains mutable. This paper explores how key theories of the philosophy of time are embodied in children's fiction, and examines just why this genre is used to explore such profound and seemingly adult concepts. It makes reference to a variety of examples, including the iconic time novel *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) by Phillipa Pearce, as well as more recent works, such as Kate Thompson's *The New Policeman* (2005).

While a number of philosophical theories seem to underpin time literature for children, phenomenology, which is focused on actual experience, is particularly relevant. Heidegger, for example, came to conceive time as a kind of

'temporal spread or field', where future-present-past are held in synthesis. Many children's fantasy novels resolve their time dilemmas in this way, often using extended metaphors to convey what words confound. The discussion also takes account of other cultures' conceptions of time. The Greek notions of *kairos* and *chronos*, and the Aboriginal Dreamtime are two examples that are represented in various children's novels and picture books. Bakhtin's formulation of the chronotope, the intersection of a specific time and place in a narrative, provides a significant framework for analysing the use of time in children's literature. This paper looks at his formulations of 'epic time', 'adventure time' and 'great time', all of which are techniques used by children's authors to play with time and to create a sense of significance and transcendence.

Adults' conceptions of childhood also have significant bearing on the portrayal of time. The fact that we read of time through the eyes of the child addressee means that we identify the time of the book with the mythic time of our own lost pasts. In one sense then, children's literature functions as a threnody for adult writers and readers. Writers in this genre are overwhelmingly concerned with overcoming linear time and the loss it engenders. They seek moments out of time, ways of bringing past, present and future together in a sense of timeless presence. Through narrative for children they are able to loosen the bonds of rational analysis and use this genre as a means of meditation on this elusive and psychologically compelling concept.

time
everlasting

Once Upon a Time into Altered States

Temporal space, liminality and 'flow'

Patrick Ryan

Traditional and literary narratives, oral and written, make reference to and play with time, creating a temporal space for narrative events and narration to happen so that the listener or reader enters the story. This is achieved through rhetorical devices, repetitive phrases, motifs and imagery, the arrangement of plot, and the physical manipulation of space and sound (in telling/listening) and space and image (illustrations and typeface in writing/reading). There are differences, as Chafe points out, in that speakers 'interact with audiences directly, whereas writers and readers usually do not. Hence, storytellers and listeners exist in the same time frame whereas writers and readers exist in different time periods' (Tannen (ed), 1982). In spite of this particular temporal discrepancy, oral and literary forms both use similar means to create altered mental states, conditions also known as liminality, flow and the hypnogogic trance. One does not always enter an altered state, but when one does, the 'reality' of the narrative becomes more immediate than the real environment of the listener or reader

Most simply described, these altered mental states are those experienced when we are 'lost in a book' and do not notice with real time passing that the room grows dark, or pins and needles in our limbs, or a family member calling to us. Or it can be seen when observing an audience (especially of children) listening to a storyteller, when they all exhibit that slack-jawed, wide-eyed, relaxed but attentive pose. In other words, the immediacy, or 'this', of the real environment becomes 'that', while the 'that' of the imagined world of the narrative becomes 'this'; it is more 'real' than reality while participants are experiencing the narration. My talk looked at the various means that narration uses to achieve these mental states. The first part explored devices in oral storytelling such as rhetoric, repeti-

tion, topoi, motifs, metaphor and simile, and vocal techniques.

Metaphors and similes, in particular, suggest specificity while actually remaining vague enough to require the listener's effort in imagining exact details in order to understand the narrative and the various meanings entailed. John Carey (2005) proposes this as a requirement of literature and art, which trigger and make use of associative thoughts, as do literary forms when using metaphor, simile and other devices. The second part of the talk then provided examples from children's literature, especially recent examples from fantasy and historical fiction such as the works of Joseph Delaney, Philip Reeve, Ian Beck and Kate Thompson. These works make us aware of anachronisms, use associative thoughts to link reality and fantasy, and play with traditional folklore forms and motifs to pull narrators into the world of the story, while continuing to make those links to reality that provide humour and meaning.

The paper concluded by suggesting that regular experience of altered mental states, especially those experienced through oral narration (storytelling and reading aloud) and silent reading, are necessary throughout life but especially in childhood and teenage years. Through experiencing such states regularly, people begin to develop, viscerally and kinaesthetically, certain concepts of time. This is necessary for an individual to develop cognitively so as to be whole intellectually, socially and emotionally. Such attainment is difficult to describe through targets and learning objectives, nor is it easy to measure through tests. Entering that 'once upon a time state' where one is 'away with the fairies', however, is a necessity in the development of reading for pleasure, and in using narrative as one of many ways of coping with and exploring all that the world presents.

The Henge as Wormhole

The uses of prehistory

Charles Butler (University of the West of England)

Henges, barrows and other prehistoric sites are common features in British children's fantasy fiction. They are natural subjects for any writer for whom questions of history and belief exercise a fascination. They have also played more specific roles in fantasy fiction: as places for ceremonial and sacrifice, as living beings, as machines, and as portals to other times and other worlds.

Catherine Fisher's *Darkhenge* (2003), a recent instance of this tradition, reflects her background in archaeology and her deep knowledge of Celtic myth and poetry. She specifically acknowledges books by Robert Graves and John Matthews, from whom she takes her reading of the myth of Ceridwen and Gwion as a type of the poet and his muse, and the notion that Taliesin (Gwion's reborn self) is not only a bard – and author of the Welsh underworld poem 'The Spoils of Annwn' – but a shaman. In her book, teenage Chloe has grown up in the shadow of her elder brother Rob, whose artistic talent has made him their parents' favourite; her own ambition to be a writer has been ignored or patronised. The book begins with Chloe in a coma, after a fall from her horse. Rob, meanwhile, finds work at an archaeological dig near Avebury where an oak tree buried upside down in the centre of Darkhenge (a ring of wooden post-holes) has recently been unearthed. He also meets a New Age group known as the Cauldron tribe, and is present when they invoke the presence of a poet-shaman (Vetch) at the Avebury Cove. Vetch appears, taking a series of animal forms that echo the transformations of Gwion. Rob becomes convinced that Darkhenge is the portal to an underworld, and that Chloe is not simply ill but has become lost in that world. Determined to rescue her, he and Vetch pass through the Darkhenge portal.

Up to this point this story appears to be Rob's. Chloe's thoughts in her coma

are subsidiary, seen in short, dream-like sections between chapters. We are thus allowed to read this as a familiar narrative: Arthur mounting his assault on Annwn, Roland at the Mound of Vandwy. Rob assumes the heroic role of rescuer by default. But there is another way of reading the story, in which Chloe is not an abductee waiting for rescue, but a shamanic traveller, who has entered the spirit world voluntarily. When Rob finds Chloe he discovers that she does not wish to be rescued. Instead, she is determined to proceed through the 'caers' (sacred sites) and sit in the chair of Ceridwen at their centre, making herself ruler of 'Unworld'. In the physical world, however, this choice will mean her death.

Unworld, being formed from Chloe's mind, draws on her experiences for its material. Because much of what Chloe knows is Avebury and its surroundings, Fisher is able to use Avebury's geography as an 'overlay' for Chloe's country of the mind. Caer Colur, the castle of gloom in 'The Spoils of Annwn,' is recognisably West Kennet Long Barrow, Silbury Hill is Spiral Castle and the final caer is the Avebury henge itself. At this point Chloe draws back at last and agrees to return to mortal life, as a shaman equipped with powerful words and the power to make them heard. The book concludes with Rob deciding that 'He'd leave it to Chloe to tell the story.'

Fisher is eclectic, but she is no indiscriminate plunderer. She attributes a positive value to the ability to translate between different ways of seeing and understanding – or rather to overlay them in order to build up a cumulative complex of meaning. Medieval Welsh poetry, Dante's *Inferno*, archaeology, folk belief and other areas are interrelated in her writing. *Darkhenge* is a textual site of great sophistication. It repays careful excavation.

time
everlasting

Childhood, the North-East and the Past

The place of history in the adolescent fiction of Robert Westall

Nolan Dalrymple

Robert Westall was a writer connected with the past; his work forces his readers to engage with the past again and again. Often the interplay between the past and the present of the north-east sits at the centre of his fiction, which makes use of devices such as time-slip to create a dialogue between different points in time. Westall believed that the deliberate distancing of a past setting brought him closer to his reader.

Perhaps all the best books ... start when the child-within-the-author turns to the real child and says, 'Come away with me, and I will show you a place you will otherwise never see because it is buried under thirty, or three hundred or three thousand years of time.' (Robert Westall, *Signal*, 28, 1979)

In Westall's work there can often be found an underlying belief in the proper role of the writer as offering guidance to his young readers. This tendency can be seen in his early notebook drafts, which inform the reader of the history of North Shields.

My fathers built a town that was like no other town. ... And now that the pattern of what they did is breaking, and homogeneous modernity is flooding in, making it like any other town, I will tell you of what they did, before it is too late. (Robert Westall, *North Shields*, unpublished)

Writing is here seen as a vehicle for preserving the identity of a region, and defending it against modernity. Valerie Krips comments on attempts by writers to assuage post-war anxiety at modernity by evoking the past in their work, which she sees as 'a response to a profound devaluation of historical consciousness'. (Valerie Krips, *The Presence of the Past: memory, heritage and childhood in post war Britain*, New York, Garland Publishing, 2000). Krips is concerned mainly with how history is recast as 'heritage'. Westall's writing is concerned more with reawakening the 'historical consciousness' which modernity so profoundly devalues. Peter Hollindale describes Westall as 'a writer for whom the past is reachable, and time is important' (Peter Hollindale, *Children's Books*, 1986), and it is this tangibility of the past which resonates in his work.

In an early, unpublished piece, Westall touches on the 'native' Northumbrian's search for belonging.

Most of the visitors are local Northumbrians ... come to stare at their beginnings; floats and tarry nets, and the smell of rotting fish. A life of hardships intolerable today; a life they do not want, and yet each summer they return like lemmings to stand and stare at it. (Robert Westall, *Craster*, unpublished)

Though this is a past 'they do not want', these 'pilgrims' are driven to seek out their beginnings in the daily life of this fishing community.

Of course, there are differences between Westall's published fiction and these short journalistic pieces which draw on recalled memories more directly. Yet even when the past is more distant, it is presented as a vibrant and living presence:

I am fascinated by time, and I think time-slips are very useful... I feel able, with research, to let the twentieth century talk to the seventeenth, and to see the seventeenth as an observer. (Robert Westall quoted in Hollindale)

Such dialogue is as central to the impact of the past, as it is to being alive in the present.

In *The Watch House* (1977), trans-temporal influence is linked to different ways of telling the past. It is through listening to oral accounts, told by local men, that the children in the novel achieve understanding. In order to understand this place, they must turn to those who have known directly of its past. Similar sentiments can be found in *The Wind Eye* (1976). The presence of Cuddy (St Cuthbert) is everywhere, both spatially and temporally; he inhabits a kind of 'time flowing not in a straight line but in loops'.

Westall held an uncompromising belief in the need to experience history as it had been lived. In 1988, he corresponded with pupils at a Birmingham school, who had challenged his use of offensive language in *The Machine-Gunners* (1975). He defended the text on the grounds of

historical accuracy, again foregrounding the relationship between a real knowledge of the past, and present/future social change.

I want to write about the way things were, and the way things are – not about how things ought to be. I suppose one could

go through *The Machine-Gunners* taking out all the sexist bits – but one would be left with a bland and boring rag. (Robert Westall MSS, *Correspondence*).

What Westall argues for is not a factual account of the past, but rather a truthful one.

Rosemary Sutcliff and the Cowboys

Imperial frontiers in a mid-twentieth-century childhood

Clive Barnes

Rosemary Sutcliff's novels of early Britain, and, in particular, the quartet which deals with Britain as a Roman frontier province, helped establish the historical novel as the pre-eminent form of writing for children in post-war Britain, and made Sutcliff its foremost exponent. The writing of history involves a dialogue between the past and the pre-occupations of the author's own time. The narrative structure of *The Eagle of the Ninth*, the first of the Roman Britain quartet, reveals that it belongs to a venerable European and American discourse that charts the impact of empire builders on indigenous peoples. By the 1950s and 1960s, the assumptions of racial superiority that underpinned this discourse were being challenged across the world. A comparison between Sutcliff's work as it develops and the western film, another imperialist narrative undergoing revision at this time, reveals the extent of Sutcliff's achievement in her own field.

In *Eagle of the Ninth* (1954), the convictions of its hero, Marcus, can be described as liberal imperialist. He is engaged on a quest for a lost legionary eagle that is intended to safeguard the future of imperial rule by depriving the British tribes of a rallying point. Yet his best friend and future wife are Britons, and he believes that whatever cultural and political differences there are between colonisers and colonised, it is possible for individuals to meet on an equal footing. Sutcliff's other novels of early Britain are characterised by personal relationships across ethnic divisions, and also reveal a fascination with the pre-literate, or barbarian, cultures of Bronze Age, Iron Age, Saxon and Viking societies in Britain. Similar revisions of imperial views are apparent in some American westerns at this time, which attempt sympathetic portrayals of native

American culture and of personal relationships between whites and Indians.

A comparison between John Ford's classic western *The Searchers* (1956) and Sutcliff's novel *The Lantern Bearers* (1959), the third in the Roman quartet, illustrates how Sutcliff's later novels moved beyond imperial attitudes, which westerns were rarely able to shake off, towards a broadly based humanism. Both works deal with the subject of the sexual appropriation of civilised women by savage men and show their central protagonists as isolated and driven men, who regard the capture of the women as an affront to their masculine and racial pride. But Ford tells the story almost entirely from the white point of view and the resolution is a restoration of the racial status quo, with the Indian captor dead and the protagonist's white niece rescued. Sutcliff, by having her hero, Aquila, captured, is able to put the barbarian point of view, while Aquila finds peace of mind only by the acknowledgement of the previously unspeakable: that he has a sister and a 'half-breed' nephew among the Saxon barbarians.

In *Dawn Wind* (1963), the novel that completes the Roman quartet, the theme is ethnic reconciliation between Romano-Briton and Saxon. Sutcliff is in tune with the sentiments that in 1948 motivated the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, aspirations for universal human dignity and social progress. Seen in relation to the changes in racial politics at the close of the twentieth century, her message is one of realism and cautious optimism. Within the space of eight novels and as many years, she transformed the British imperial narrative for children. In the western film, there is no single revisionist body of work to match this.

Reifying the Unthinkable

Children's literature and the Holocaust

Rebecca R. Butler

How can young readers be alerted to the horrors witnessed by earlier generations? The presentation summarised here proposed that children's books about the Holocaust must meet four criteria.

1. The text must be unflinching yet tolerable for the young reader. It must not gloss over the terrible truths, but it must not give young readers nightmares.
2. The suffering must be reified through the creation of credible characters, able to command the interest of young readers.
3. The movement of time must form an integral part of the narrative. A structure must be found that links to contemporary issues. If racism and totalitarianism still stalk our world (as they do) then young readers must be alerted to these dangers.
4. The text must above all avoid didacticism. Few things cause young readers to close a book faster than a suspicion that they are being preached at.

Using these criteria, two contemporary novels were evaluated, namely *Sisterland* by Linda Newbery and Lois Keith's *Out of Place*. The protagonists of Newbery's book are two contemporary sisters and their grandmother. The whole family believes that Heidigran migrated to England after the Second World War. The onset of Alzheimer's disease gradually reveals the truth Heidigran has repressed: she was a Jewish refugee

from the Nazis. The recognition that they have Jewish blood throws both sisters into a turmoil, bringing the issue of prejudice into the contemporary age. The best friend of the older sister is gay and his would-be boyfriend is an Arab.

The protagonist of Keith's story is a little girl named Eva who is growing up in Austria under the Nazi Party. Eva is disabled. Her mother takes her to meet Nazi medical authorities who can 'help' her. She is destined for the gas chamber as a 'useless eater'. Eva's family has a Jewish housekeeper, whose daughter is about to embark for England on the Kindertransport. The daughter has the brilliant idea of taking Eva with her as her cousin. Thus a disabled Gentile child is saved by masquerading as a Jew. The story follows Eva's life in England where she remains mobile, has a job and is a useful member of society. She loses her chance of a happy marriage to a Jewish boy when his mother discovers that she is a Gentile. This is a story where kind people tell lies and cruel people tell the truth. Keith's use of irony, always skilled, is remarkable here.

Both these books meet the four criteria proposed above. While both are probably most suitable for readers of secondary school age, the complexities of Keith's book perhaps make it suited to a readership of fifteen plus. Both books illustrate competently how the horrors of the past can affect families in contemporary society. Both books offer young readers a vivid sense of time past, present and future as aspects of an historic continuum.

Anne Frank's Fictional Heiresses

A comparative study of three Second World War mock diaries

Rose-May Pham Dinh (Université Paris 13)

The Second World War is one of the many periods evoked in 'diaries', supposedly written by children growing up at the time, in collections published by Scholastic in the USA and the UK, and Gallimard in France. Such collections testify to the publishers' belief in historical fiction as a means of introducing children to the past, and in the particular value of the diary format as a narration which allows the readers to experience that past by proxy through identification with the diarists. The fictional wartime diaries of Madeline Beck, by Mary Pope Osborne (Scholastic US, 2000), Edie Benson by Vince Cross (Scholastic UK, 2001) and Hélène Pitrou by Paule du Bouchet (Gallimard, 2005) present an additional challenge, because of the universal but ambivalent status ascribed to the *Diary of Anne Frank*.

All three of these fictional books are similar in structure and appearance. The fictional part is supplemented by information on the historical context. The front and back covers, through text and illustration, hint at the combination of personal stories with national history that characterises the genre, and play down the fictional nature of the books. The diarists are all female, like Anne Frank, and close to her in age. While diary writing is indeed often rightly perceived as a feminine activity, as Philippe Lejeune has shown, this gender bias also echoes the belief that girls are better symbols of wartime victimhood; it also makes sense in view of the predominance of girls among readers of fiction.

The diaries intertwine references to historical events with chronicles of

their heroines' lives and preoccupations. The neatly dated entries offer the readers bite-size portions of narrative but are no guarantee that readers will be aware of the historical time sequence. What is made more perceptible is the personal growth of the heroines. Although they occasionally derive some fun from the conflict, their childhood is marred by fear for their lives and those of others. They prove able to rise to the challenges of war and behave in an 'adult' way, but sometimes relapse into adolescent preoccupations or childish fears. On such occasions, the diaries record the heroines' regression, and their subsequent shame. They show Madeline and Hélène progressing from self-centredness to concern for others, and developing greater political awareness of the stakes of the war through their friendships, while Edie, a more mature character, consistently shares her interest in public affairs with the readers.

This genre obviously enjoys worldwide popularity with readers who may easily become addicted. The diaries cleverly mix the personal and the historical, but are more likely to facilitate the readers' identification with the narrators than to promote a sense of historical distance. While the child diarists are realistically characterised by a limited understanding of events and relative powerlessness, the books emphasise their resilience. They are pleasant to read as the personal stories of sympathetic heroines, but their historical impact on readers, especially those with little knowledge of the period, remains to be proved.

time
everlasting

Dear Diary Now and Then

Maiko Miyoshi

There are many instances of the use of diary formats in recent historical fiction. Voices of young characters in fictional diaries from the past appeal to peer readers today with familiarity and immediacy, despite the difference of period between them. In particular, in the case of fiction in diary format, the content appears trustworthy, since the word 'diary' impels us to think about something personal, private, confessional and thus truthful. Such a legacy is also supported by the existence of real diaries, such as that of Anne Frank which testifies to the life of a persecuted Jewish girl during the Second World War. Through reading fictional diaries, modern young readers discover the way of life and incidents the diary writers encounter in the past, and develop understanding that 'dusty history stuff' is not to do with boring dead people, but with those who have had a life, just like the modern readers.

However, the writing in diary formats is not always 'realistic' in terms of historical accuracy. The very illusion of reality that diary as a format creates has the possibility of misleading young readers today into developing a different view about the past. An example of this is Karen Cushman's diary of a medieval girl *Catherine, Called Birdy* (1996) which includes details of the life of a daughter of a knight in medieval England. This book reveals a more subtle issue than the inclusion of physical information about the past – the applying of a modern mentality to the diary writers of the past.

Modern-day readers may question how the protagonist has become literate and obtained writing materials in mediaeval times, but it remains difficult for them to appreciate how the concept of 'individual identity' scarcely existed, when they read a diary with a 'real voice' from the past. This text has obvious playfulness and functions as a parody by inserting elements from the modern day, thus revealing that it is a modern creation rather than a realistic diary from the past.

Conversely, there are other texts whose writers intend to conceal their artifice. Such texts are much more modern than their time setting, and thus try to present the fiction as factual. Celia Rees's *Witch Child* (2000) contains devices such as a convincingly factual modern-day character with an existing email address. Yet this modern character in a way links the past and present as well as fiction and reality. On the other hand the American *Dear Diary* series is a compound of two sections: firstly, fictional realistic diary accounts in the past and, secondly, real historical materials. These two sections are designed to be directly read by modern readers, who are not necessarily aware of the fact that the first part is fiction whereas the second part is factual.

Thus it appears that while fictional diary accounts seem to shorten the distance between past and present, the excessive use of this device may unintentionally sever the link between the past and the present.

Heritage in Greek Children's Literature

Marianna Spanaki

Notions of heritage inscribed in twentieth-century Greek children's fiction vary from those which project metahistoric knowledge about an era and a major city, to the thematisation of mythology and childhood. Moreover, women's autobiographical texts and children's fiction which draws on these have constructed new approaches to heritage. This paper discussed four examples of Greek children's fiction with heritage themes: palace societies, siblings renegotiating their childhood experience,

the legacy of the Greek diaspora and the Second World War and its aftermath.

Penelope Delta is considered the most widely read children's author in Greece. She uses diary entries and recollections in the construction of the autobiographical text *Early Memoirs* (published posthumously in 1980) and the children's novel *Trelladonis* (1932). The autobiographical text which provides the background to the short novel is set in Alexandria, shown

through the eyes of a young girl brought up there. The mischievous actions of small children are presented in *Trelladonis* in which the narrator refers to childhood and the adventures a brother and sister have when they put to sea unsupervised in a small boat, and find themselves at risk in a sudden storm. Although Delta's coming to Greece is associated with her writing of ethnocentric accounts of history in children's fiction, it is from the diaspora community sites of memory from childhood that she addresses her own life and that of her brother Adonis Benakis, the founder of a private museum in Greece. Thus she makes her texts sites of heritage culture by using her own mediated memories.

Antiquity has provided the backbone to fiction exploring heritage issues, often in the context of myth and archaeology. Nikos Kazantzakis' children's novel *The Palaces of Knossos* (1988) focuses on pre-history. The palace of Knossos is central to knowledge about the Minoans and so the writer introduces the site as the setting for most of his narrative. What is emphasised in the text is the collapse of one world, that of the Minoans, and the rise of a new power, that of the Athenians. Furthermore, Kazantzakis' interest in reli-

gion is manifested in this novel with ritual dances intended to invoke the presence of the deity.

Another writer, an educationalist, has turned to the founding myth of Rome at the time when urbanisation increased across Europe and in Greece. Sophia Mavroidi-Papadaki's *Myths and Legends of Rome* (1984) includes child characters and discusses the abolition of slavery within the establishment of a new city. The founding myth of Rome is used as a background to illustrate the process of integrating different populations.

The movements of the Greeks of the diaspora have also been thematised in a late twentieth-century novel by George Sarri. *The Story of Ninet* (1992) follows a marriage between a French woman from Senegal and her Greek pen friend, a French language tutor from Constantinople. They move to Odessa with their daughter Ninet and afterwards to Athens. The novel investigates the life experiences of diaspora Greeks as refugees in Greece as well as issues of biracial relationships. It also refers to French colonisation in Africa, and its effects on attitudes held by different characters in the novel.

Discourses of History in Portuguese Children's Literature

Intertextuality and parody

Sara Reis da Silva (University of Minho, Braga, Portugal)

A most profitable and frequently recurring strategy of humour in Portuguese children's literature seems to be parody. This is characteristically constructed from the recovery of fragments of history, including the portrayal of historical figures against a background of mythological beings and other imaginary entities. But if this is one of the most common and successful ways for young readers to look back into the past, the contact with fictional discourses promoted by an exercise in memory – originated, for instance, by literary hypotexts – can also be productive in developing literary competence.

My paper reflects on this theme by cross-reading a body of texts which includes Inácio Nuno Pignatelli's *A Verdadeira História da Batalha de S. Mamede* [*The True History of the Battle of São Mamede (based on the historical fact of King Dom Afonso*

Henriques' refusal to eat his soup)] (2000), Luísa Ducla Soares's *A Nau Mentireta* [*The Mentireta Ship*] (1991), Manuel António Pina's *Aquilo que os Olhos Vêem ou O Adamastor* [*That Which the Eye Can See, or Adamastor*] (1998) and *O Tesouro* [*The Treasure*] (1993), and José Vaz's *A Fábula dos Feijões Cinzentos – 25 de Abril, como quem conta um conto* [*The Fable of the Grey Beans – the 25th of April told as if it were a story*] (2000). This is a set of works born out of the fictionalisation of crucial moments in Portuguese history: the dawn of Portuguese nationality in the first case; the great sea voyages (the so-called Discoveries) in the second and third; and the 25 April 1974 Revolution in the last two named. These works stand out either for their innovative and strongly comic components or for the importance of memory in the return to and recreation of the past.

Multiple Chronotopes in Postmodern Metafictional Picture Books

Arlene Hsing (Newcastle University, PhD student of children's literature)

Metafiction, as explained by Patricia Waugh, is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. The term 'chronotope', introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin, is defined as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.' (*The Dialogic Imagination*, 1981:84). In the current paper, these two theoretical concepts provide the foundation for the analysis of postmodern picture books by John Burningham, Anthony Browne, Monique Felix, David Macaulay and David Wiesner.

Some postmodern picture books make use of multiple chronotopes, so that the narrative structures become increasingly perplexing. Through the accompanying pictures, the spatial aspect of the chronotopes can be given particularly innovative treatments in picture books. Because space and time work together to make up a chronotope, changes in the spatial dimension inevitably affect the way time is rendered. Some creators subvert the linear narrative by offering manifold visual narratives while others omit the conventional

distinction between the primary and secondary worlds. Consequently some unique chronotopic forms have been developed in this genre.

Additionally, multiple narratives deriving from multiple chronotopes can also produce ambiguity on both verbal and visual levels. For example, in *Black and White* (David Macaulay, 1990), the non-synchronic depiction of time may frustrate readers who are attempting to grasp how time functions in the narrative. Such postmodern works not only urge readers to acquire sophisticated reading skills, but also force them to accept some inevitable frustration in the process of reading. Bakhtin's framework gives us a way of avoiding a simplistic understanding of fictional narrative; we can also evaluate the individual creator's treatment of time and space from the differences between the chronotopes created. In the texts discussed, which are identified as postmodern metanarrative picture books, fantasy converges with realism in various ways, and hence their use of chronotopes is sophisticated. Verbal and visual techniques cooperate in the distinction between these different chronotopes, and various ambiguities in the construction of time are presented to the reader.

Addressing the End of Time

Discovering new opportunities for dialogue around death and grieving in three contemporary crossover picture books

Maija-Liisa Harju (McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada)

Acknowledging the notion of time's end or its continuance through death is a great challenge for adult or child, as is coming to terms with the concept of lost time when loved ones pass on, or that of being able to preserve time with them through memory. This paper investigates how Western children's picture books represent the complexity of death and grieving in relation to time. In particular it highlights three contemporary 'crossover' picture books: Michelle Lemieux's *Stormy Night*, Michael Rosen's *The Sad Book* and Pernilla Stalfelt's *The Death Book*. These texts are 'crossover' because they address child and adult as equal readers. By providing alternate death experiences for children and adults to relate to regarding time's end, they chal-

lenge the assumption that children cannot grasp complex philosophical concepts.

Stormy Night, *The Sad Book* and *The Death Book* open up possibilities for new dialogues in death literature through 'equal' address (an approach that promotes and equally values multiple interpretations from a dual readership), using non-linear narrative strategies to tackle the complexities of time and death. All three encourage critical questions to challenge existential queries, rather than offering solutions. This promotes a shared reading experience between children and adults that is respectful, illuminating and comforting, based on mutual questions and concerns regarding death and grief.

Locating Leonardo: researching da Vinci for *The Medici Seal*

Theresa Breslin

During the years when I wrote *The Medici Seal* I trawled all manner of materials relating to Leonardo da Vinci, studied his works and followed his travels through Italy. A considerable part of his life was spent in Milan; he lived there on two separate occasions and it was there that he painted both his famous *Last Supper* and, less well known, the ceiling of a room in the Castello Sforza. The convoluted yet mathematically precise pattern of this ceiling gives insight into the mind of its creator. A similar extreme attention to detail is also to be seen in his city plan of Imola, which is displayed at the railway station there. Using the most basic of measuring tools, he drew an aerial view of the streets and buildings exactly to scale.

In Milan many of his engineering designs have been realised, in particular those on flight. Gazing up at the outspread wings of his flying machine, I marvelled at the vast leap of imagination he must have made in order to conceptualise this machine in an age when some people believed the earth to be flat. But his inventiveness was not whimsical: it was accompanied by the pursuit of scientific truth that took him to the mortuaries of the city to anatomise corpses.

For an artist to survive in Renaissance Italy, it was absolutely essential to have a patron, and at one time Leonardo was employed by the ruthless warlord, Prince Cesare Borgia, as an engineer with the task of fortifying various Borgia castles. Da Vinci was fascinated by power, both in the shape of man-made

forces and in natural instances such as wind and water. During an autumn visit to Italy, I was sitting under a sycamore tree when one of the key-shaped seeds came spinning from a branch to land at my feet. As I picked it up, I thought: Da Vinci would have noticed how the sycamore seed very distinctly corkscrews when falling. His drawings show that he was fascinated by motion, by waves and hair and fluidity of liquid. There is an astonishing sketch of the valve of the heart centuries before modern scanning techniques proved his depiction accurate.

One of my research stops was at the huge fortress at Imola where Niccolo Machiavelli was sent by the Council of Florence to make peace with Cesare Borgia, upon whose actions he based his book *The Prince*. It is believed that it was here too that Machiavelli and da Vinci became friends.

I read da Vinci's writings, his stories, riddles, jokes, puns, poems and fables. It was to his stories that I returned – after every research trip; after every writing session; when the book was going well; and especially when it was not. They reveal his sense of humour, his illuminating wit, his profound respect for nature and his never ceasing quest for enlightenment. From all these sources evolved the Leonardo da Vinci who compassionately rescues a child from drowning, and then goes on to become benefactor, mentor, and finally friend, of the boy Matteo in my book, *The Medici Seal*.

time
everlasting

Pandora's Box or the Ethics of Time Travel

Some reflections on the experience of writing a children's time-travel trilogy

Linda Buckley-Archer

Time-slip has been a perennially popular genre since H. G. Wells wrote *The Time Machine* a decade before Einstein began his work on relativity. A century later, our understanding of the nature of time and the relationship between gravity, space and time means that physicists can at least theorise about how time travel might be achieved. My own novel sequence, *The Gideon Trilogy*, was written on the premise that navigating time might ultimately be possible. Time travel was not, in fact, the original motive for writing the trilogy but it has become the wheel on which the narrative turns, and I have been increasingly fascinated by the theme of scientific discovery (and the accountability of the responsible scientists) as I have researched and developed the story.

The books follow the adventures of two twenty-first-century children who are befriended by a reformed cutpurse when an antigravity experiment accidentally catapults them back to 1763. A notorious villain makes off with the anti-gravity machine and the children are obliged to enter the criminal underworld of eighteenth-century London to retrieve it. The narrative switches between the children's adventures and the twenty-first century where parents and police try to work out what has happened. The first volume of the trilogy looks at the eighteenth century through the eyes of the two twenty-first-century children, the second volume looks at the twenty-first century through the eyes of an eighteenth-century villain. The final volume deals with the apocalyptic consequences of the discovery of time travel.

I started to write the trilogy for my own children at a time when I was both revisiting the books that had inspired me as a child and reassessing my own childhood. It was reading about eighteenth-century criminality which prompted me to start writing. I was intrigued by the idea of a London populated by an army of footpads, cutpurses, link-boys, moon-cursors and anglers – a city and an age defined by the criminals they supported. A time-slip novel – unlike an historical one – allows the reader to empathise with the time tourists as they marvel at and struggle with the differences between then and now. In writing the trilogy I have often found myself treading a delicate path between fact and fantasy, carefully researching historical and scientific themes but also, occasionally, taking terrible liberties.

Time travel has proved to be an endlessly rich seam to mine. It has allowed me to explore many themes: the nature of time; time anomalies (if I go back in time and kill my parents will I ever be born?); and the nature of memory. I have been interested both in finding history in the present and, conversely, the present in history. As one of the characters in the trilogy says:

Time is not our master, despite the relentless swing of the pendulum. Through the power of Memory and of Imagination, do we not swim through the rivers of Time at will, diving both into our past and our Future? Equally the notion that Time is constant is mere illusion ... Therefore, do not let Time be your master, rather seek to master Time.

'This Is Long Ago'

The manipulation of time in *Mopsa the Fairy*

Marilyn Pemberton

Notwithstanding the fact that a single definition of time has eluded philosophers and scientists since human beings first sat and pondered the meaning of things, we continue to try to comprehend the incomprehensible. Fantasy writers in particular have been fascinated with exploring what would happen if: if time went backwards; if we could travel through time; if time ended ... The traditional fairy tale looks to the past by telling of events that happened to characters 'once upon a time', and also projects into a future when they all live 'happily ever after'. In addition, time inside fairyland often moves at a totally different rate from that in 'our' world, so that visitors can have adventures seemingly lasting for days, months or even years, only to find on returning home that they have not even been missed.

The magic of fairyland enables writers to create their own temporal laws. In *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869), Jean Ingelow includes practically every aspect of time possible: time travel, reversal of time, the stopping of time; linear, liminal and mythical time; public and personal time; time as hero and time as villain. In this book-length fairy tale, young Jack finds four nestling fairies inside a hollow hawthorn tree and is transported to fairyland on the back of an albatross. Jack discovers that, although the fairyland he is visiting apparently occupies the same physical space as his 'real' Victorian world, it is in fact thousands of years back in time. Mopsa, one of the nestling fairies, explains to him, 'You've got something

in your world that you call TIME ... so you talk of NOW and you talk of THEN ... THIS is that time. This IS long ago.'

Although time plays an important part in this fairy tale, the measurement of it is nigh on impossible. Each country that Jack visits, although they are only a few days' journey apart, is at a different season of the year, and at night there are three moons, each at a different stage of its cycle. In addition, time moves at different rates: it is fast for some, slower for others, stops for some people, and runs backwards for others. In the first country Jack visits, for instance, Ingelow critiques Victorian cruelty to animals: time is reversed for the horses that have been physically abused by their masters in the 'real' world when they are brought to fairyland to be restored back to youth and health. In another country, Ingelow warns of God's judgement and the inhabitants are turned to stone for twenty-two hours each day in punishment for their cold-heartedness. Whilst they are stone, it is as if their time stands still, for they do not age, and it is only when they come to life at twilight that they continue where they left off the previous evening.

Jack's quest in fairyland is to help Mopsa attain her destiny to become Fairy Queen. Jack's ultimate destiny, however, is to return home, where he quickly forgets Mopsa and his visit to fairyland. It is for the readers to recall the past and reflect on the present, in order to reform their future, in this world and the next.

time
everlasting

Witches' Time in Philip Pullman, C. S. Lewis and George MacDonald

William Gray

MacDonald, Lewis and Pullman all seem determined to take their child readers seriously, to trust in their capacity to make what they can of supposedly 'difficult' philosophical ideas. Children too are existing individuals, in an existentialist sense, with at least a tacit knowledge of being mortal, subject to time.

In Pullman's *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra asks the witch Serafina Pekkala how long witches can live. A thousand years, replies Serafina, though she herself is only three hundred. She continues: 'You are too young, Lyra, too young to understand this, but I shall tell you any way and you'll understand it later; men pass in front of our eyes like butterflies, creatures of a brief season. We love them; they are brave, proud, beautiful, clever; and they die almost at once.' (p.314) Here Pullman introduces to younger readers the themes of *tempus fugit* and *memento mori*. He is telling all the truth of 'the human condition', but 'telling it slant' (Emily Dickinson). The chapter 'Lyra and her death' in *The Amber Spyglass* (2000) shows Lyra and her companions, in search of her friend Roger in the world of the dead, encountering head-on 'the deaths' of those who find themselves by chance in 'the holding area' of that world. Besides echoing folk traditions, Pullman's figures of death seem to embody what Heidegger called the 'mineness' of my death. Pullman is arguably re-mythologising existentialist ideas (e.g. 'being-unto-death'), as well as the traditional theme of *ars moriendi*. Pullman also entertains a quasi-Wordsworthian mystical pantheism. When the ghost of Roger

becomes the first to achieve release from the world of the dead, it is presented as a moment of intoxication (Pullman's 'happy hour' version of pantheistic mystical surrender!).

Given this sunny view of extinction, it is ironical that Pullman accuses Lewis of taking death too lightly, when he criticises Lewis for his 'horrible' message that being killed in a train crash is great if you end up in Heaven. Lewis does take death seriously, especially in *The Magician's Nephew* (1955). While Pullman's witches have a natural longevity that highlights the brevity of human life, Lewis's witch Jadis has acquired immortality that is unnatural, or more precisely sinful, since it depends on a repetition of the original sin of eating the forbidden fruit. Diggory rejects this temptation in the name of good, ordinary ('merely' Christian) values.

In MacDonald's work there are, as well as traditional wicked witches, what might be called good witches. In *The Wise Woman* (1875), the shape-shifting wise woman is at least a kind of white witch. She manipulates time in her work of bringing a range of characters ultimately to salvation. Princess Rosamond, baffled by the shifting appearances of the Wise Woman, asks her whether 'it was you all the time?' The latter replies: 'It always is me, all the time.' This Platonist privileging of eternity over the relativities of time is echoed in *The Princess and Curdie* (1883), where Irene's great-great-grandmother (another 'good witch', to say the least) claims scandalously that 'of all things time is the cheapest.'

With Meccano to the Stars

Farah Mendlesohn

My main concern when reading science fiction for children is the various ways in which authors have envisaged children interacting with the world, and making the future. The juvenile fictions of the 1950s were frequently very direct about this: boys (and some girls) were depicted as engineers, astro-navigators and farmers. In the 1970s, children got to organise revolutions. From the 1980s onwards however, both child and adult protagonists were increasingly depicted merely as users and consumers, able to buy and to play with shiny new toys, but lacking the information to make those toys themselves, or even to dismantle them in the name of revolution. Between 1980 and 2000 science fiction for children became oddly disempowering.

At stake is one of the crucial elements of the science-fiction genre: the relationship of humans to the universe. The classic fantasy relationship is one of destinarianism, and/or of moral justice, but the classic science-fiction relationship with the universe is antagonistic: the universe is out to get you and the only thing that can save you is your ability to manipulate your environment. This ability can be deployed on a strange new world, or in cyberspace, but it demands of humans that we exist in 'creative antagonism' to the world. Too much modern science fiction for children either assumes a natural inborn human

passivity in the face of hardship, something which bears no relationship to the realities around us, or a technologically induced passivity which underestimates the degree to which humans have historically used technology to release time for ever greater creativity.

Creating a plausible fictional future depends in part on accepting a realistic notion of the human animal in reaction to its world, but this in turn depends on having a *realistic* construct of the world to play with. This needs to be understood in the context of science fiction as a genre of realism rather than fantasy. The created science-fiction world needs to be incredibly information dense: a fully plausible future world must ring coherent and true in terms of material, intellectual and ethical structures. This means that that world must be a character, with reactions (political and physical), just as a person has reactions. But this can be contentious because the type of information density which is necessary for successful science fiction, and the concomitant demand that the reader *learn*, is usually thought to be incompatible with good fiction. What may be even more contentious is that there are children who positively *like* the kind of writing that is so often condemned by critics in the field of children's fiction as being overly didactic.

time
everlasting

The Near Future in Science Fiction for Children and Young Adults

Jessica Yates

When, back in the 1940s and 1950s, writers of adult SF turned to writing SF for the young, as a result of their dissatisfaction with the adventure series of 'pulp' writers, they wanted to develop a young readership for SF which would grow up to read SF published for adults. The writers also wanted to develop a citizenry which would grow up with the dream of space – people who, as adult scientists, engineers, politicians, journalists and voting citizens, would do what they could to make space travel a reality. A third reason for their endeavours was to warn young people, in dystopias, about the dangers of certain developments, so that they would guard against political tyranny; this is seen in the work of Wells, Orwell and Huxley, as well as in the more horrific end-of-the-world scenarios, especially those involving nuclear war. The fact that we have escaped the horror of all-out nuclear war between the USA and USSR, a threat with which most of us grew up, has been partly due to the lessons taught by SF, together with movies such as *On the Beach* (from a novel by a mainstream novelist Nevil Shute) and *Dr. Strangelove*, made by Stanley Kubrick out of a genuinely passionate fear of nuclear war. Books for teenagers also made this point when anxiety revived in the early 1980s; notable instances are Louise Lawrence's *Children of the Dust* (1985), Robert Swindells' *Brother in the Land* (1984) and Raymond Briggs' *When the Wind Blows* (1982).

Other ways to end civilisation as we know it have been less prominent in children's fiction, though adult SF has pretty well explored every possible route to destruction. Now that global warming and the melting of the polar ice-caps have come to the fore, is science fiction fulfilling its duty to warn us of the consequences? Public awareness about the damage

humans are doing to the planet hit the headlines with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, June 1972, and was featured in many non-fiction books published around that time. Apart from war, the main issues were pollution of air and drinking water by factories and waste, overpopulation, the destruction of the natural environment, desertification and poisoning of lakes. Global warming was noted, but was not high on the agenda. The polar ice caps melt in two classic SF novels for adults: due to malevolent sea-dwelling aliens in John Wyndham's *The Kraken Wakes* (1953) and as a result of extreme solar activity in J. G. Ballard's *The Drought* (1962).

Novels for discussion in the workshop included books on extreme weather disasters, as well as global warming; these books share common concerns such as whether human beings will act cohesively or in conflict, and the permanence of climate change. In some cases blame is laid on present and past generations which brought the disasters upon our world and destroyed our civilisation. First I introduced some novels from the last thirty years: Penelope Lively's *The Voyage of QV66* (1978); Monica Hughes' *Ring-Rise, Ring-Set* (1982), *The Crystal Drop* (1992) and *Invitation to the Game* (1990–1991); Louise Lawrence's *Moonwind* (1986) and *The Disinherited* (1994); Ann Halam's *Transformations* (1988); and Jean Ure's *Watchers at the Shrine* (1994). I went on to discuss novels from the last ten years: Lesley Howarth's *Weather Eye* (1995) and *Ultraviolet* (2001); Marcus Sedgwick's *Floodland* (2000); Chris Ryan's *Flash Flood* (2006); Susan Pfeffer's *Life as We Knew It* (2006–2007); and Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* (2002), with the sequel *Zenith* due in 2007.

What Albert Did Next

Kuhnian approaches to the child in science

Alice Bell

Images of the child are often associated with those of the future. Those who work with children often emphasise the importance of their work in terms of doing something positive about the future. Yet children's literature is often accused of living in the past, relying on adults' ideas of what it is to be a child, placing the adult-past into the child-future. To consider children as 'the future' is to consider them as adults; as children, they are not the future but the present.

I find this issue particularly interesting when considered in the context of science, because science is also linked to discourses of the future. This similarity can lead to problems where science and the child meet. Noga Applebaum has considered this issue in terms of children's literature on technology, suggesting that an adult's unfamiliarity and distrust of new technology is misplaced when placed in literature for children (see *IBBYLink* 14, and *The Journal of Children's Literature Studies*, vol. 3, issue 2, July 2006). Questions also arise when it comes to the teaching of the next generation of scientists: how can the previous generation teach for the change in thinking that is assumed to come in the next?

An example of a writer considering the latter problem is Russell Stannard, and it is his *Uncle Albert and the Quantum Quest* (1994) which my paper takes as case study. Uncle Albert is an old, clever and slightly odd scientist. When he thinks very hard he can create a thought bubble so powerful that his niece, Gedanken, can

go inside and play with scientific worlds. Stannard has written about his motivations in writing the Uncle Albert books (see *IBBYLink* 16). With the Gedanken character he hopes to inspire what he calls the 'Einsteins of the future'; those who will form the next big revolution in science. I suggest Stannard takes a somewhat Kuhnian approach to ideas about scientific change over time. Kuhn's contention may loosely be described as a conviction that science develops through stages. Generational difference and conflict are key to new ideas. Literatures that build similarity between generations and maintain stability rather than encouraging change over time are dangerous.

Yet there are many places where we can see Stannard 'enrolling' the child into ways of thinking based more on his generation's thinking than on that of his audience. In some ways this is the old story of adult writers trying to impose their ideas on child readers. I argue from this that all approaches to science education that take such a Kuhnian framework, aiming to inspire revolutions of the future, will fall into such traps. Our hopes for the future are always based on the past; something truly novel comes out of nowhere. However, I further emphasise that Stannard seems quite comfortable with this situation, and from this I suggest that such rooting of the future in the past is inevitable. It may on occasion be problematic and is still worthy of analysis, but it is not necessarily something we should be ashamed of in children's literature.

time
everlasting

Children's literature events in Autumn 2006

Launch of Elizabeth Laird's *Oranges in No Man's Land*

On 10 October at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, this very topical short novel about the life of a young girl in war-torn Lebanon was launched. The author kept a diary when she was living in Beirut during the previous hostilities there, and when she wrote this book had no idea that the country would be plunged back into war in 2006. The gripping story is narrated by ten-year-old Ayesha, who makes a perilous journey across the city, including crossing the no-man's-land between warring factions while urgently seeking medical help for her sick grandmother. The book is published by Macmillan (ISBN 0-33045-027-1) – if you haven't yet read it, go to www.panmacmillan.com for further information.

In the Picture: The Story so Far

This conference on the representation of disabled people in children's books was held at the National Centre for Voluntary Organisations near King's Cross, London, on 11 October, under the auspices of Scope, a charity campaigning for equality for people with cerebral palsy. After an introduction by Tara Flood, director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education, Susan Clow, project manager for Scope, spoke of the virtual invisibility of disabled children in children's fiction, although there are some non-fiction books in this area. She mentioned the potential market for such books, not only in schools and with parents, but also among childminders. Richard Rieser, director of Disability Equality in Education, then spoke about the way the traditional model of disability has conveyed the message of low expectation; disabled children have often been portrayed as pitiable victims or even as figures of fun. His recommendations included showing these children as ordinary people involved in life in a variety of ways.

Laurence Anholt, who collaborates with his wife both in producing books and in selling them in their own bookshop in Lyme Regis (where children are encouraged to handle models and play with tactile books), tried to dispel the fear that many authors have in handling the theme of disability – mistakes are inevitable and there's no such thing as perfection, but it's worth the attempt. His talk was followed by one by Wendy Cooling, who emphasised that all children need high-quality books including disabled characters; they need not be the main protagonists, but their presence in the story, as in the instance of a deaf girl in Elizabeth Laird's *Oranges in No Man's Land*, can have a positive effect.

Much of the rest of the conference was devoted to two projects, the Liverpool John Moores University scheme in which disabled people and families work with multi-media students (described by Nicole Matthews) and the Quentin Blake award group which asked children about their responses to the depiction of disability issues (described by Alex Strick). After presentations about these projects, conference members divided into workshops devoted to one or the other of them. This was followed, after an excellent lunch, by a short focus on the work of libraries and a stimulating panel discussion. My only reservation about the event was that, as so often, the speakers were 'preaching to the converted'. As well as authors, illustrators, teachers and others concerned with children's literature, the publishers attending, who have such an important role in bringing to the fore the children's books concerned, were notable in that they are already doing what they can in this area. What about the large number of publishers who were not represented there, who would undoubtedly have gained from the perspectives supplied by the speakers?

For further information about the projects concerned visit www.childreninthepicture.org.uk.

Patrick Hardy Lecture

Meg Rosoff, the acclaimed author of *How I Live Now*, whose new book *Just in Case* was published in August, gave this annual lecture, arranged by the Children's Book Circle, at Goodenough College near King's Cross, London, on 18 October. Her title 'Why would any sane adult read children's books?' was designed to be provocative for an audience largely consisting of people whose professions demand from them exactly this kind of reading. She spoke of her own development as a reader in what now seems a relatively safe world, and the way in which readers today may well seek escapism in fiction which provides a happy ending. She also suggested that adults may read children's books out of nostalgia, but the main motive for doing so should be that the books are 'very very good', in which case whatever the age at which they are ostensibly aimed, they will aid the transition to adulthood.

Booktrust Teenage Prize

The awards ceremony for the recognition of books aimed at young adult readers was held on 2 November at the Penguin offices in the Strand, London, (from the balcony of which there is the most splendid view of the Thames in both directions!). As well as the short-listed authors, Paul Magra, Ally Kennen, Marcus Sedgwick, John Singleton, Siobhan Dowd and Anthony McGowan (the winner, with his book *Henry's Tumour*), the event was marked by the presence of the teenaged judges and their parents. It was good to chat to some of these young people and witness their enthusiasm for reading – and also to meet their parents, who were basking in their offspring's success!

Poetry Matters

The culminating event of the 2006 Children's Bookshow was a discussion at L'Institut Français on 15 November between Carl Novac, a Belgian author who lives in France, and Michael Rosen. Quentin Blake was in the chair, and inevitably when it came to questions, found that the largely young audience directed nearly as many to him as to the featured authors, who spoke about the sources of their inspiration and their collaboration with various illustrators.

The event was also associated with the publication of *Universal Verse: Poetry for Children*, by Deborah Hallford and Edgardo Zaghini (published by Barn Owl Books and supported by Arts Council England; ISBN 0-90310-561-8). This impressive compilation includes reviews of poetry books (accompanied by illustrations of their covers), divided into sections for children under 5, from 6 to 8, from 9 to 11 and those over 12. These reviews, of both anthologies and single author collections, are by a range of very well-informed and committed commentators on children's literature, and should provide an invaluable reference source for teachers and parents. But the delights of the book do not end there: after Michael Rosen's brief but entertaining foreword, Morag Styles supplies in only four and a half sides a very useful history of poetry for children; John Foster describes the process of compiling a poetry anthology; Mandy Coe, herself a poet, provides some helpful thoughts about bringing poets into schools; Jane Ray discusses the illustration of poetry; and two publishers, Gaby Morgan of Macmillan and Janetta Otter-Barry of Frances Lincoln, share with the reader their views about the value of poetry for children. A highly recommended book!

Eleanor Farjeon Award

This prestigious recognition of services to children's literature was this year made to Wendy Cooling at the Unicorn Children's Theatre on 21 November. Competition was keen in that the other candidates nominated were Philippa Dickinson, Brian Wildsmith and the Unicorn Theatre itself. But as Elaine McQuade's proposal made clear, Wendy's work in inspiring parents and teachers, bringing books to disadvantaged children, and in particular in promoting reading in the BookStart initiative, means that she is a worthy winner. Anne Harvey, on behalf of the sponsors of the award, took advantage of the location at the Unicorn to describe Eleanor Farjeon's lifelong connection with children's theatre. Then Wendy Cooling spoke of the importance of story and imagination in the development of children's reading – if they are given only excerpts they are less likely to develop a real love of literature. She also

emphasised the need to let children read as they choose and to develop at their own pace, going forwards and backwards as far as the demands of the books they are reading are concerned.

The Next J. K. Rowling? Children's Literature Grows Up

This was the title of a forum held in Norwich on Sunday 26 November for an audience of aspiring writers for children. It was run by the New Writing Partnership as part of a four-day event entitled 'Thriving and Surviving as a Writer', covering a range of different genres. Panel members were children's writers Gillian McClure and Keith Tutt; Caroline Horn, organiser of ReadingZone.com website; and myself. Another children's writer, Catherine Johnson, was in the chair. In fact, Rowling's work was scarcely mentioned; among the numerous topics covered were the exciting range of possibilities open to today's writers for children, collaboration between authors and illustrators, and the future of children's literature. Questions from the floor reflected a sound knowledge base and a high degree of commitment from the audience. It is well worth looking into events like these – go to www.newwritingpartnership.org.uk for further information.

Children's Poetry Bookshelf Write-A-Poem

The awards for this competition (divided into the age groups 7 to 8 and 9 to 11) were also made at the Unicorn Theatre, on 13 December. The prizewinners, nearly all of whom were present, read their own poems and received a number of poetry books for themselves and their schools. The theme of the competition was 'Me' and the eleven winning poems (out of nearly 5,000 entrants) show an interesting variety of approaches to the subject (sport, riding a bicycle down a hill, being adopted from China, etc., etc.). They are published in a booklet and are also available on the website www.childrenspetrybookshelf.co.uk. Do look!

Pat Pinsent

Children's Books

The Beatrice Letters

Lemony Snicket, London, Egmont, 2006, hb 1-40522-748-6, £12.99.

Lemony Snicket is the pen name of Daniel Handler, whose cult creation, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, has now achieved its thirteenth and final episode, as well as a film based on the first two books. *The Beatrice Letters* is an additional volume published between the penultimate and concluding books, and claims to contain a clue to help readers anticipate the denouement in advance of reading the final novel. Handler's *Series* is noted for its ubiquitous narrator, whose distinctively sardonic and pedantically explanatory literary style provides a tongue-in-cheek commentary on the pseudo-Gothic disasters which dog the footsteps of the orphaned Baudelaire children. Snicket, as executor of their story, dedicates each volume to 'Beatrice', apparently his lost love, and the *Letters* provides background to the reason for the dedications, while confusing readers even further – in true Snicketian fashion.

Like the *Series* books, this is an attractive book to handle – Handler respects his young readership with the sophisticated packaging as with his subject matter and style – produced like a quarto portfolio. In this are a double-sided poster whose picture is also split up for use as illustrations in the bound volume of letters between Lemony Snicket and Beatrice which fills the other folder within the portfolio. These letters recount aspects of the relationship between Snicket and Beatrice, and hint at a surprising connection between Beatrice and the Baudelaire orphans. Clues (real or misleading) abound, including perforated letters concealed in each picture which form a variety of intriguing anagrams. Compulsive sleuthing for *Series* fans ...!

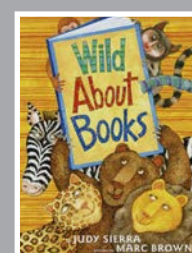
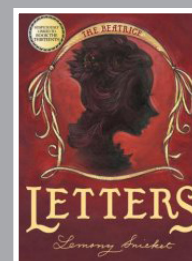
Wild about Books

Judy Sierra, illus. Marc Brown, Frances Lincoln, 2006, hb 1-84507-526-9, £10.99.

It all started when Molly McGrew drove her mobile library van into the zoo by mistake. The animals are fascinated by her reading aloud and soon all of them want to learn how to read too. Molly finds just the perfect book for each animal – tall books for the giraffes, small books for the crickets, joke books for the hyenas. In no time Molly has them going simply wild about the wonderful books. Not only do they read but they also become writers, and Molly helps them open their own zoo library.

Sierra's story is written in compulsive rhyme, which cries out for an Early Years audience to learn it and join in. The textual puns are enhanced by additional references within the illustrations (llamas reading *The Grass Menagerie*, penguins writing *The Iceman Cometh*), those illustrations themselves being lively, bright, and filled with detail which young readers will enjoy exploring. The punning title states the book's aim: to enthuse emergent readers about books, and to sing the praises of libraries. In these treasure houses we can see that there is something for every taste, together with opportunities for enjoying the work of others and for gaining inspiration and courage to write for ourselves. A satisfyingly multicultural final spread translates the theme of the book into our own society, and the final text refers us to some of the well-known texts which the animals have enjoyed throughout the story. A compelling volume for encouraging both literacy in its widest sense, and books and libraries in particular.

reviews



The Library

Sarah Stewart, illus. David Small, Frances Lincoln, 2006, hb 1-84507-494-7 £10.99.

A book about the love of books, which itself is a lovely book. The story of Elizabeth Brown, an American who is only interested in books and reading, is illustrated with delicate watercolours, humorously depicting the development of Elizabeth from her childhood to her old age. This is framed within an outer and an inner border, into which parts of the main picture sometimes stray. The outer border contains the verse text, and small pen and ink sketches which elaborate the main visual images. Brown was a real librarian and is the book's posthumous dedicatee. If this is based on her life, then it appears that her passion for books eventually resulted in a house so full of books that one day she signed the entire collection over to provide a free library for her home town. The fascination and entertainment that books offer readers permeates every inch of this book, and the endpapers (shelves filled with exciting and mysterious looking volumes) entice everyone who opens it to read, and read and read some more. Every library should have one (or, even better) two copies.

Bridget Carrington

On Angel Wings

Michael Morpurgo (text) and Quentin Blake (illus.), Egmont Press 2006, hb 1-4052-2175-5, £4.99, 48pp.

A telling of the Christmas nativity story by Michael Morpurgo and Quentin Blake at a time when even Oxfam is calling their 'Christmas' gift catalogue 'Winter 2006' is interesting. As those of British origin fall over backwards to understand and accommodate those of other faiths, the publishers must be hoping that this book by these high-profile creators of children's books will appeal to those who still wish the children in their care to know the origins of the traditional British Christmas.

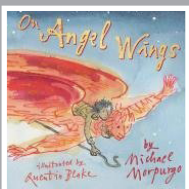
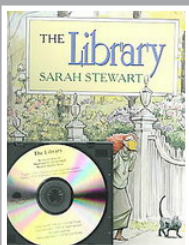
The inviting cover shows the shepherd-boy narrator flying to Bethlehem on the back of the Angel Gabriel in Blake's style of non-pretiness, with red and gold colouring against a blue-grey sky invoking a feeling of both an inner warmth and an outer cold.

The story is told from the shepherds' viewpoint. The shepherd-boy narrator on the cover is the inner narrator. The narration is started by the grandson as he listens to his grandfather telling the Christmas story as he participated in it as a boy. The story is then told by the grandfather. The grandson rounds off the story at the end of the book. A little complex perhaps.

Once into the story I couldn't put the book down – and yet this story is ingrained in me. It starts with the Angel Gabriel surprising the shepherds. The angel's words are a mixture of biblical and modern: 'I bring you news of great joy. For tonight, only a few miles away from here in Bethlehem a child has been born, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. [...] Would you like to see him for yourselves? [...] Do you want to go or don't you?' This sounds much as you would expect, but then the story takes a twist and will keep any child, whether reading or being read to, wanting to go on to the end.

The words and illustrations meld together. The illustrations somehow manage to convey both the time long ago and the now, the colours conveying the mood of each piece of text.

If you still believe in Christmas, this is the just the book to give to a child of any age. The dedication says 'For all the children who read this on Christmas night.' Yes, magical.



Shanyi Goes to China

Sungwan So, Frances Lincoln 2006, hb 1-84507-470-X, £10.99, 38pp.

This book is from a series of photographic information books 'Children Return to their Roots'. Each book is told in the first person of a child describing a visit to their family's homeland.

The format of the book and the statements of subject and key stages make me think the series is aimed primarily at educational use. However, parents and grandparents who have themselves lived most of their lives in China would be able to give a lot more meaning to the unusual aspects of the book in home use.

The book is written as the diary of a girl, born and brought up in Britain, visiting China with her parents and younger brother. The photographs suggest an age of the girl of about eight but the writing implies a sophisticated older child.

As any good travelogue, the photographs are excellent and the text well written and matched to each picture. The short paragraphs under or above each photograph evoke each place and its culture.

The places described include both towns and cities, tourist attractions and family homes. Visits to markets and shops, journeys by boat and by tram and up in a fast lift of a skyscraper give an idea of the breadth of the travelogue.

No explanations of the customs and practices that would strike a child brought up in Britain as strange are given and the style of the writing suggests the compliance of the visiting family to what might seem rather unusual practices: 'On his kitchen table there was an altar to the Zaoshen (kitchen god) who looks after families.' Very few reactions from the girl are recorded – there is no comment on 'Inside the [ancestral] hall ... I helped to put incense on the Tudi (a local god of the land). Then we all stepped up, bowed and offered incense to our ancestors.' However the exclamation mark reads as a comment in 'Nainai [paternal grandmother] burned money for our ancestors' ghosts to spend in the afterlife!'

Read in a school or home situation, the book would cause much discussion – not just of the places visited but of how a British–Chinese family would react to these. Some are now fairly familiar in Britain, for example, a Chinese herbalist, but others such as a Buddhist temple may not be. The practices mentioned above could lead to much thought and further interest.

A glossary of the more unusual words (e.g. erhu, hongboa, mahjong) and an index are provided.

The author was born and lived in Hong Kong until his 20s. He is now resident in the United States.

A beautifully produced well-written book to provoke thoughts on the current debate on what it means to be British and yet to have non-British cultural roots.

Christophe's Story

Nicki Cornwell, illus. Karin Littlewood, Frances Lincoln, 2006, pb 1-84507-521-8, £4.99, pp.96.

The author got the idea for this book after translating for many French-speaking Central African refugees and hearing the terrible stories of how they came to be refugees. Christophe is an eight-year-old Ruandan refugee in England and the story starts with his first day at the local school. He has not been to school for two years. His native languages are Kinyarwanda and French.

Arriving at the school gate, Christophe is reluctant to enter, while his father tries to cheer him up (in improbably perfect English!). I also felt that the teacher's request



to the class to say ‘Good morning, Christophe’ didn’t quite ring true. However, the atmosphere of the class is well captured, “‘Sit there next to Greg!’” Miss Finch pointed at an empty place. ... Nobody spoke. He felt as if everyone was looking at him.’

When the teacher asks Christophe to read, he replies ‘I don’t like reading!’ His homesickness and rebellion result from his conviction that stories are for telling rather than reading. Later he tells the class his own story, and Miss Finch wants to record it. This again conflicts with Christophe’s understanding of storytelling and the role of the storyteller, while he is shocked that she has ‘taken’ his words. A compromise is eventually reached when Christophe’s oral storytelling is recorded on tape, which Christophe finds an acceptable compromise: “‘This is the story of how I came to this country,’” he said.’ When Christophe is then asked to tell the whole school his story he finds the prospect too daunting; he finally agrees that Miss Finch can write down the story from the tape recording and read it at a school assembly. His parents are also present. Eventually the story is made into a published book – perhaps stretching the reader’s imagination a little far.

I was crying as I read parts of this book – the descriptions of the family’s fear as the father went with the freedom fighters who came to their house in an attempt to save his family, the attack on their home, the killings and the journeyings to reach England.

My quibbles are with the way ‘Christophe’s story’ has been framed to set it in an English school setting – but these are trivial quibbles compared with the profound and hard-hitting message it conveys of the suffering war brings: no heroes or flag waving here and no glossing over the mental and physical agonies that wars cause.

Jennifer Harding

Critical texts

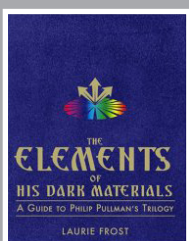
The Elements of His Dark Materials: a guide to Philip Pullman’s trilogy

Laurie Frost, Buffalo Grove: The Fell Press 2006, pb 0-97594-301-4, £17.99, 542pp.

This encyclopedic work carries a foreword from Pullman himself bearing testimony to the enormous labour that has gone into this volume of 550 pages; as he says, ‘if I didn’t know something, I just made it up. Professor Frost had the far harder task of making sense of it and reducing it to order.’ The order that Frost creates is divided into twelve parts, by far the biggest of which is a single section on ‘Characters’. Other sections, such as ‘Places and peoples’, ‘Applied sciences and technology’ and ‘Social structures of the worlds’, are mostly subdivided, so that for most subject areas readers will be able to go straight to the topic of their interest, be it Rusakov particles, Biblical allusions, food and drink, or whatever. Full references to the relevant pages in Pullman’s texts are provided throughout. There is however no index as such, though the detailed breakdown in the table of contents in most instances makes it redundant.

The trigger to this book was Frost’s own need while reading Pullman’s books to inter-relate people, places and allusions; as she became more involved in colour coding she realised that this was an extensive project, and as it went on she felt the need to add longer analyses. These latter are full of interest, and suggest that Frost has the capability to produce some interesting critical interpretations now that she is free of this mammoth task. She notes, for instance, that ‘interestingly for a novel ... the importance of oral storytelling is far more apparent than telling stories in print. The Bible and *The Book of Changes* are the only two books mentioned specifically by name’ (p.317) – an observation which would repay some critical attention.

As well as a good deal of supporting material drawn from records of interviews that various people have had with Philip Pullman, Frost supplies supporting excerpts



from other sources, such as an interview she herself had with Ray Villard, news chief at the Baltimore Space Science Telescope Institute (p.407).

For students of Pullman's trilogy this will be an indispensable reference book, and it is difficult to reconcile the enormous amount of work that Laurie Frost has put into it with her description of herself: 'When her daemon settled as a sloth no one was surprised.'

Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century: mothers, children and texts

Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles, with Shirley Brice Heath, Lichfield: Pied Piper Publishing 2006, pb 0-95463-848-4, £20, 244pp.

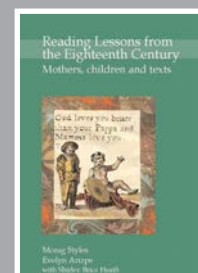
It is entirely appropriate that after a succinct and informative foreword from Victor Watson, the first section of this book, by Morag Styles, is entitled 'A story about a story...'. While attesting to her own, and her subject's, belief in the power of narrative, this technique very effectively allows Styles to inform her readers, not all of whom may yet know Jane Johnson, about the process of discovering the material that this eighteenth-century wife and mother produced for her own children, and also of its historical importance. The ramifications of the worldwide search for other items written by Johnson, after the distinguished researcher Shirley Brice Heath had introduced a Cambridge audience to this previously forgotten figure, reveal the important role of serendipity and coincidence in the compilation of this archive.

The fact that Johnson, a relatively 'ordinary' wife of an Anglican clergyman, wrote a vast number of stories and poems both to entertain her own children and to teach them to read, raises a good many other questions, not all of which can yet be answered, about the role of mothers in educating their children, especially girls, and the importance of female literacy in a period when women's domestic role was paramount. It appears that Johnson's reading and writing not only had a function in the education of her own children, but also 'provided her with intellectual and moral strength [and] consoled her and allowed her to vent her feelings' (p.117). If this was true of her (as indeed it had been in the better documented instance of the seventeenth-century New England poet Anne Bradstreet), how many more women must there be whose little-esteemed writings have not survived for us to read today! The family tradition of writing seems to have continued with Jane's son Robert and daughter Barbara, and the accounts of their own adult reading which have survived also throw a good deal of light on a relatively under-researched area.

The final section before the extensive bibliography is by Shirley Brice Heath, who extends the focus of the book by looking at some of the evidence which the archive affords about the games played by eighteenth-century children. She concludes by observing how the material created by Jane Johnson shows that

Along with [health, peace competence], she adds imagination and empathy, qualities essential to sustaining a vitality in and for life that carries one from the private to the public, from childhood to adulthood, from child's play to the 'deeper game' of growing up. (p.204)

On the back cover, Margaret Meek Spencer describes this book as 'essential for social historians of childhood and reading teachers'. In agreeing with her words, I am appreciative of the way in which Arizpe, Styles, Brice Heath and Watson have reclaimed Jane Johnson so that she can stand as a representative of the many women throughout the ages whose activities related to literacy have been an unrecognised legacy to subsequent generations.



The Translation of Children's Literature: a reader

Gillian Lathey (ed.), Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd. 2006, pb 978-1-85359-905-7, £21.95.

Just as it has only slowly come to be recognised that children's literature is an academic discipline distinct in itself, an awareness of the special skills required in the translation of children's books has also been slow to appear. By collecting some of the classic articles on this subject from a wide range of sources, Gillian Lathey, director of the MA in Children's Literature at Roehampton University, has done an enormous service to the increasing number of students directing their gaze to children's books in languages other than those in which they were first written. As she indicates, the purpose of the book is to make readily available studies 'that reflect the development and range of writing on the translation and international exchange of children's books over the last 30 years' (p.4).

These articles demonstrate two specific aspects of translations for children: their implied readers have a different social status from that of adults, and these readers also possess the special qualities of childhood that need to be remembered by translators just as much as by children's authors. In being aware, for instance, of the need to use a vocabulary that is not too difficult for the young readers even when referring to objects and aspects of life that may be unfamiliar to them, the translator must avoid the corresponding desire to explain everything in enormous detail. An extreme instance of the latter failing is highlighted by Emer O'Sullivan (2003) in one of the three articles by her in this book: she quotes at length a German version of *Alice in Wonderland* in which the translator, not content simply to explain that 'mock-turtle soup' is not made of real turtle flesh, insists on inserting a recipe for cooking it.

Lathey's first section is devoted to theoretical approaches, and includes the classic work of Zohar Shavit (1986), frequently referred to by later writers. Shavit's consideration of scenes deleted in translations of *Gulliver's Travels* is an early instance of a theme much pursued, that of censorship; Marisa Fernández López (2000), for instance, details how concern about racist and xenophobic aspects of children's books was slow to percolate into Spain, that country being for a long while more preoccupied with 'unsuitable' elements related to sex or religion.

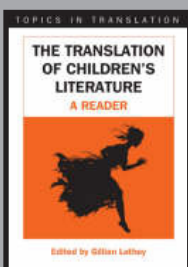
Other sections of the book focus on narrative communication and the young reader, the translation of visual material, cross-cultural influences and the voice of the translator. O'Sullivan's article to which I have referred above occurs in the narrative section; those who are already familiar with Seymour Chatman's work on the distinction between the implied reader and the narratee will find illumination in O'Sullivan's expansion of this to cover the situation of translated fiction.

The section on visual texts provides a horrendous instance of German spelling out of the translator's understanding of the meaning of John Burningham's *Granpa* (O'Sullivan, 1992), a valuable perspective on intertextuality from Mieke Desmet (2001), and an interesting article by Lathey herself (2003) on tense shifting and the historic present – a topic originally pursued by the distinguished translator Anthea Bell (1987) in her piece in the final section.

Fairy tales form the main theme of the section on 'the travels of children's books', though a more recent example, analysed by Nancy Jentsch (2002), is that of the Harry Potter books. The Western European provenance of so much of the translated material is also highlighted. Finally, the section based on the personal statements of translators includes a short but stimulating article by Cathy Hirano (1999) on translating from Japanese.

I have focused on only a very few of the fascinating insights to be derived from this book. It is clear that there is a need for much more investigation of the specific features of translating for children, and that this collection provides a valuable step in this direction.

Pat Pinsent



Books for Africa, Books from Africa

IBBY (the International Board on Books for Young People) is proud to announce the launch of the virtual exhibition 'Books for Africa, Books from Africa'. This showcases the production of books published in Africa by Africans for African children. The books displayed in this virtual exhibition celebrate the fact that African writers, illustrators, editors and publishers give importance to providing quality reading material for children and promoting childhood literacy by attempting to make books available to African children in their home languages.

Eighty-four children's books published by 43 different publishers from 15 African countries in more than 12 languages are presented in the following categories: picture books, children's fiction, folk tales, fiction for young adults, others. This exciting new virtual exhibition can be accessed by logging onto [www. ibby.org](http://www.ibby.org).

A team of international specialists have selected and reviewed the titles under the leadership of project editor Meena Khorana, professor of English and Adolescent Literature at Morgan State University, Baltimore (Maryland, USA) and project director María Candelaria Posada, editor, translator and IBBY project leader. The project is supported by the IBBY-Yamada Fund.

***Bookbird* special on Chinese children's literature**

Bookbird, the international IBBY journal edited by Valerie Coughlan and Siobhan Parkinson from Ireland, has devoted a special issue (vol. 44, no. 3, 2006) to Chinese children's literature in honour of the recent IBBY congress in that country. This issue of *Bookbird* includes articles about the context of Chinese literature in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and on specific authors and themes. It is very rewarding reading: you can learn about Chinese science fiction for children, poetry, picture books, and in particular the way in which children's literature in this increasingly influential part of the world is currently developing. A subscription form may be downloaded from www.ibby.org

Further details from journals@utpress.utoronto.ca.

news

notes

events

exhibitions

conferences

Conferences, Exhibitions and Events

Acts of Reading: Teachers, Texts and Childhood from 18th Century to the Present Day

Homerton College, Cambridge, 19 and 20 April 2007

Shirley Brice Heath is the keynote speaker. The conference will include a launch for the book *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century: mothers, children and texts* (see review elsewhere in this issue of *IBBYLink*). See www.educ.cam.ac.uk/actsofreading/index.html for details.

IRSCCL 18th Biennial Congress. Power and Children's Literature: Past, Present and Future. Call for papers

Kyoto, Japan, 25–29 August 2007

Proposals are invited for papers, panels and posters. Children's literature has the power to help child readers towards many positive qualities; conversely it can also serve state propaganda. Keynote speakers will include Tadashi Matsui, Susan Napier, Masahiko Nishi and Roberta Seelinger Trites. Details about the conference itself and about contributing to it can be found at www.irsccl.info/e-callforpapers.htm. Further information: www.irsccl.info/index.htm or irsccl2007_kyoto@hotmail.co.jp.

British IBBY conference 2007

Roehampton University, London, 10 November 2007

The next conference of the British section of IBBY will be held at Roehampton University on Saturday 10 November 2007. Its subject will be international illustration. Further details from NHGamble@aol.com.

Tove Janssen conference

Pembroke College, Oxford, 24 March 2007

Further information from Kate McLoughlin (K.McLoughlin@englit.arts.gla.ac.uk).

Marxism and Children's Literature conference

Senate House, University of London, 9 June 2007

Speakers include Alan Gibbons and China Mieville. More information from m.baron@bbk.ac.uk.

The Story and the Self: Children's Literature – Some Psychoanalytic Perspectives

University of Hertfordshire, Fielder Centre, Hatfield, 13 and 14 April 2007, 10am–4pm

Speakers include Margaret Rustin, Michael Rustin and Rosemary Stones. Contact Lisa Garner (L.A.Garner@herts.ac.uk) 01707 285695, University of Hertfordshire, School of Education, de Havilland Campus, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9AB.

Poetry Book Society T.S.Eliot Prize school shadowing scheme

The Poetry Book Society is launching a scheme by which 14–19 year olds will shadow the judging panel for this prize. Run in partnership with the English and Media Centre, the scheme will invite teachers to encourage their classes to read a selection from the ten collections on the shortlist and to vote for their favourite. There will also be a competition for individual A-level students, to find the best 500-word rationale

for their choice of poet. More information from www.poetrybooks.co.uk and www.englishandmedia.co.uk.

Exhibition: Happy Birthday Miffy!

The reopened Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green is one of the locations staging an exhibition of the work of the Dutch artist and author Dick Bruna. It celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of Bruna's creation of the character Miffy and continues until 18 March 2007. There will be a full account (by June Hopper) of a visit to this exhibition in the next issue of *IBBYLink*.

Stephen Spender Prize 2007

Translate a poem from any language, classical or modern, into English.

The Times Stephen Spender Prize 2007 is open to any British resident or British citizen of any age. There are three categories – open, 18 and under and 14 and under. There are cash prizes and the winning entries are published in a booklet. The last posting date for entries is Friday 25 May 2007. For details and entry forms go to www.stephen-spender.org.

Write Away relaunch

The Write Away website (www.writeaway.org.uk) was relaunched in October 2006. It remains a subscription- and advertising-free zone thanks to the support of a cast of excellent reviewers and writers, many of them IBBY members. With a searchable bank of reviews, interviews and articles, the site is a useful source of information about children's books and writing. In February, Write Away will launch an online reading group and there are plans for the launch of an online writing group later in the year. Register at the site to join in. Enquiries to: info@writeaway.org.uk.

news

notes

events

exhibitions

conferences

Our thanks to the sponsors of this issue, **Parga Publications**, Nicosia, Cyprus, and to **Dora Oronti**, artist and author, who has facilitated this contact. See enclosed flyer for details of her picture books, which we hope will soon be available in this country.

The next issue of *IBBYLink* (Summer 2007) will be devoted mainly to environmental themes. The following issue (Autumn 2007) will consider Scotland and children's literature. Contributions are invited for both issues. We also welcome reviews, reports, comments and articles on other topics for inclusion either in these or subsequent issues. Please send all items to Pat Pinsent by 30 April for inclusion in the next issue. Copy date for the Autumn 2007 issue is 31 July.