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Editorial *by Pat Pinsent*

This issue is so filled with good things that an editorial is almost superfluous! There is no point in my introducing the range of short articles by a distinguished range of writers on disability in children's fiction—go ahead and read them!

But it is worth commenting on how much more conscious we have become in recent years about the role which fiction can and should play in all children's lives. We are no longer thinking only of how so called 'normal' children can learn from fiction about the 'problems' of those with limited aural or visual perception or mobility, or with learning disabilities, but rather, and less patronisingly, about these children who have an equal right

to literature which no longer renders them invisible.

Disabilities rights have been left quite a long way behind equality consciousness concerning gender and race, but are now beginning to catch up—and children's literature can be a prime agent in the process. It's good that, quite independently, international IBBY in *Bookbird*, and British IBBY have decided to focus on the subject, and I hope that the articles which follow will provide a useful contribution to the debate. We are also grateful to Oxford University Press for despatching this issue. A list of some of their books which focus on disability is also included here.

Living with cerebral palsy

by Jane Stemp

i.
*If I have learnt anything it is
that you can't go through life
hating what is where you aren't
when you want to be*

*and anyway how should I learn
your style? You can't imagine it;
this thing is not so much a cage
as people think, but I cannot*

*live your likeness. I move
in a language apart, I
can speak and you can answer
but that is not the same*

ii.
*This is another country.
I wake and sleep.
People swim like fishes in the silence
behind their glass border*

*mouths open, shut.
This language of the body
admits no irregular
constructions.*

*I have no interpreter.
I wake and sleep
and mostly I ache
one way or another*

British IBBY Activities

by Ann Lazim, Chair of British IBBY

Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2002

The British Section of IBBY is delighted to announce that the UK nominees for the Hans Andersen Awards in 2002 are Aidan Chambers and Quentin Blake.

Aidan Chambers is a prominent figure in the development of children's literature criticism and his books *The Reading Environment* and *Tell Me* (both published by Thimble Press) have helped many teachers and children to ask thoughtful questions about what they read and thereby enhance their enjoyment of literature. His novels *Breaktime*, *Dance on My Grave*, *Now I Know*, *The Toll Bridge* and *Postcards from No Man's Land* (all now available in the Red Fox Definitions series) have pushed the boundaries of what is possible in teenage and young adult fiction. His work has long been appreciated in Europe and North America, and last year he received well-deserved recognition in this country when *Postcards from No Man's Land* won the Carnegie Medal.

Quentin Blake, Britain's first Children's Laureate, has had three books nominated to the IBBY Honour List (*How Tom Beat Captain Najork and His Hired Sportsmen*, *Mister Magnolia* and *Clown*) but, amazingly, has never been nominated for the Hans Andersen Award until now. Choosing a representative selection from his work to send to the jurors is no mean feat—see Quentin's book *Words and Pictures* (Jonathan Cape) for a full bibliography of the books where he has created both words and pictures, and the many where he has supplied the illustrations for the writing of others, including Roald Dahl, Michael Rosen, John Yeoman, Joan Aiken and Russell Hoban.

The full list of nominations from member sections of IBBY has not yet been made available but some of this information can be gleaned via the internet. For example, the USA is nominating Susan Cooper and David Macaulay, and Canada Dennis Lee and Michele Lemieux. South Africa and Ireland are putting forward single nominations, Niki Daly and Martin Waddell respectively. A list of all the nominees will be published in our next newsletter. The announcement of the winners will be made at the Bologna Book Fair in April 2002.

IBBY Honour List 2002

In addition to the Hans Christian Andersen Awards, which recognise the entire body of an author's and an illustrator's works, and their lifetime's achievement, each member section of IBBY can nominate

one book in each of the three categories of writing, illustration and translation which will become part of the biennial IBBY Honour List. This is a travelling exhibition and will have an accompanying annotated catalogue. The British nominations for the 2002 Honour List are:

- **writing:** *The Other Side of Truth* by Beverley Naidoo (Puffin)
- **illustration:** *Falling Angels* by Colin Thompson (Hutchinson)
- **translation:** *Where Were You, Robert?* by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, translated from the German by Anthea Bell (Puffin)

Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities 2001

At the Bologna Book Fair in 2001, the third biennial IBBY exhibition of *Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities* was launched. This is accompanied by an illustrated and annotated catalogue and is coordinated by Nina Askvig Reidarson, Director of the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People, in Oslo.

The exhibition is made up of 40 titles from 15 countries. The books fall into three broad categories.

First of all, books produced specifically for young people with disabilities, including those which have sign language illustrations or pictograms, and tactile and textile books.

The second category is general picture books. The criteria for selection included the consideration of special needs with regard to design, topics, illustrations and texts in combination with artistic and literary quality, and having a 'grown-up' feel suitable for adolescents with language disabilities. Also books which encourage general understanding and special skills, such as language, visual perception and motor skills. *A Triangle for Adaora* by Ifeoma Onyefulu (Frances Lincoln) has been included here.

The third category is for books—picture books and stories—that feature positive depictions of people with disabilities. The teenage novel *Stuck in Neutral* by Terry Trueman (Hodder) is included here, as is the picture book *Sosu's Call* by Meshack Asare, available in the UK from African Books Collective in Oxford.

Enquiries about the catalogue and the exhibition should be directed to:

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Tales of Diminished Responsibility

by Rachel Anderson

Becoming parents of a special* child (*substitute ESN, SEN, challenged, dippy, dappy, God's Own, child of diminished responsibility, according to preference) is like joining a club that you'd much rather not be part of. You don't, at first, even know who the other members are. You suspect you won't like them. Then, club-life takes over your days, your nights, your life, your private thoughts. If you happen to be a writer, it infiltrates your work.

In 1981, I was writing *The Poacher's Son*, a rural tale set in the early 1900s. An unexpected character crept in, 'poor lolling Jonas who had no strength in his spindly limbs, no sense in his wizened head.' I'd no idea why he was there. He does nothing but sit, propped up, beside the fire. Jonas had to go. I gave him the measles. By page 90 he was mercifully dead.

After publication, I realised that *The Poacher's Son* coincided with my husband's and my increasing awareness of, and despair about, our own son's condition and future. For us, measles was not an option.

I took a more deliberate step towards facing reality with an article for *The Sunday Times* about how children like ours were transported each day to and from their schools for the Educationally SubNormal. (The letters ESN were later transposed to SEN for Special Educational Needs). A small publishing house, CIO, invited me to re-tell the article as a children's story. As a result of *Tim Walks*, a larger firm, A&C Black, asked me to write something similar for their Jets series. At the time, it was a daring move to feature a girl with Down's syndrome (bad, bossy, strong-willed Jessy) in a mainstream learn-to-read scheme.

My confidence to write about the people I used to fear and who are now my friends, continues to grow, as does my various editors' boldness in publishing such stories.

Meanwhile, the vigilant wardens of niceness remain on the alert to spot any deviations and to send out angry letters to the publishers:

'A professional with some experience should have been chosen to write about this difficult subject'. (re: *Jessy Runs Away*)

'This book will do positive harm.'

'I would not be happy for children to read this.' (re: *Best Friends*)

'Offensive.' (re: *The Bus People*)

Yet when any story is denounced by some well-meaning do-gooder, I feel a thrill of defiant pride.

Let's face it. Out here in the club of real life, dappy people such as my son and his lumbering pals, frequently disturb normal people, either by their eccentric behaviour or simply by existing in such a disabled way.

So it stands to reason that truthful stories about them may sometimes be disturbing too.

"Out here in the club of real life, dappy people such as my son and his lumbering pals, frequently disturb normal people..."

Select Bibliography of books by Rachel Anderson:

- *The Poacher's Son* (OUP 1982)
- *Tim Walks* (CIO 1985)
- *Jessy Runs Away*(1989),
- *Best Friends*(1991),
- *Jessy and the Long-Short Dress*(1993), A&C Black (also published as *Jessy and the Bridesmaid's Dress*)
- *Paper Faces* (OUP 1991) Loopy Lil remains oblivious to WW2
- *Black Water* (OUP 1994) Epilepsy beside the Thames
- *Big Ben* (Mammoth 1998) Elder brother goes away to SEN college
- *The Scavenger's Tale* (OUP 1998) Abandoned children's body organs get nicked
- *Warlands* (OUP 1999) Refugee changes the way family stories are told
- *The Flight of the Emu* (Hodder 2001) Dyslexic in care seeks new dad

Writers and Disability

Rachel Anderson

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Challenging Ways of Seeing

by Beverly Naidoo

Like most of my writing, the *Letang and Julie* books, illustrated by Petra Röhr-Rouendaal, have a political (small 'p') origin. Some years ago an anti-apartheid activist friend—he went to jail in his wheelchair—said something that profoundly affected how I thought about disability: 'Able-bodied people are extremely wasteful. If people in wheelchairs had designed these buildings, we could have saved a lot of material. Doors, walls, cupboards... could all have been halved in height. Of course, you would then have to bend down to get through our doors and *you* are the ones who would be disabled!'

This startling image caused me to reflect on how little I had previously questioned notions of disability. In South Africa, segregation of schools followed lines of so-called 'handicap' as well as 'race'. My major childhood image of disability derived not from real people but from a plaster-cast model outside the local pharmacy. It was of a child leaning on a stick, holding out a box, instead of a cap, for our pence. Where disability was represented in children's books, it was almost always for negative effect.

My growing self-awareness coincided with an invitation to create a small series of books for the Longman Book Project. I knew it was essential that my own ways of seeing should be thoroughly challenged before I began. A week assisting at the Markfield Project in Haringey provided my most formative first-hand learning. Its principle was that all the experiences should be accessible and challenging to disabled and able-bodied children alike.

"If people in wheelchairs had designed the buildings, we could have saved a lot of material"

On the day of an outing to an adventure playground, I was assigned to stay close to a child with severe co-ordination difficulties, with instructions only to intervene if I really felt she was in danger. I saw the raised walkway and my heart sank. In a trice my child dashed to a scooter and raced upwards, with me in hot pursuit. She seemed drawn to the edge—with only a narrow bar between her and disaster! Each time she veered to the rim, I lurched towards her, then stopped myself, remembering my instructions. Sure enough, every time, she

swerved back from the brink.

During a rainy lunchtime, she settled down indoors in the middle of a former 1000-piece jigsaw. Neatly cut bite-sized sandwiches tumbled out of her lunchbox, mixing jigsaw and sandwich. My instinct was to help her separate them. Wouldn't she choke? Instead I held back and watched. Her tongue got to work and, one at a time, out came the jigsaw pieces! Her

solution looked a little messy but that was surely my perception—and my problem.

I continued my research at a junior school with a positive approach to inclusion. Children and specialist staff became my advisers, later commenting on my drafts. I couldn't have written the *Letang and Julie* books without sensitising myself to the issues. I couldn't write challenging literature if I wasn't challenged myself. As a bonus, both the research and the writing were fun!

(Letang's New Friend, Trouble for Letang and Julie and Letang and Julie save the day were all first published by Longman in 1994)

IBBY MEETING

There have been two meetings of the British IBBY committee since the last Newsletter was published. The first, on September 5th, was largely concerned with finalising our nominations for the IBBY Honour List (see report by Ann Lazim on page 2), but also touched on future plans for the Newsletter and the new arrangements for administration since the transfer from NCRCL.

The second meeting, on October 1st, covered quite a wide agenda, ranging from finance and membership (if you haven't renewed your subscription yet, please do so soon! We are especially keen to remind Corporate members about this) to IBBY role in the Children's Laureate process and the projected IBBY Website. Detailed plans for the chairing of sessions at the November conference were drawn up. It was also proposed to take the opportunity of many members being present in order to further plans about a new name for this Newsletter—we shall ask people to bring suggestions and consider those we've already had, with a small prize, probably a book, for the person with the winning title.

Nikki Gamble is organising a meeting to discuss the hoped for location of the 2008 IBBY Congress in Britain. People who might be able to further these plans will be invited on Monday November 12th, at Random House, Vauxhall Bridge Rd, London SW, 11:00-12:30. Anybody who feels they have something to contribute is asked to contact Nikki about possibly attending this meeting (nhgamble@cs.com).

Writers and Disability

Beverly Naidoo

British IBBY Activities

The Writer's Dilemma

by Elizabeth Laird

Children's literature is a pretty good mirror of the attitudes of society. A trawl through the works of past eras produces a sorry picture of the way disabled people have traditionally been viewed. In fairy stories, physical difference is often a mark of evil or magic, from the odious dwarf Rumpelstiltskin to the giant in 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Later, when children's fiction began to be written, disabled characters were often made out to be sinister, like Captain Hook or Long John Silver. Perhaps more insidious and controversial are the stories where the disabled person is pathetic and passive, a saintly victim, like Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*.

A new and positive wind is blowing nowadays. Disabled people are seeking empowerment and forcing a change in perception. They are no longer prepared to be patronised or demonised. They want their voices to be heard.

Children's writers are very aware of the influence they wield. We know that we can mould attitudes and are acutely sensitive to the moral universe we portray in our writing. We know that publishers, librarians, teachers and parents examine what we write with scrupulous care, ready to pick us up on anything that smacks of racism, sexism or any kind of 'moral turpitude'. It's only right and proper that a consideration of disability should also enter the frame.

In recent years disabled people have remarked not so much on damaging stereotypes portrayed in new children's literature as on the absence of disabled characters. They ask, quite reasonably, why we can't write about disabled children doing ordinary things—playing and arguing, making friends and quarrelling with them, setting goals and achieving them, being good guys and even bad guys—simply being ordinary, as disabled children are in real life.

Disabled people have the right to demand a greater representation and many authors and illustrators have responded to it, but this is where we come to the writer's dilemma. All good stories are written from the heart, and writers have to feel confident of their characters and the feelings they attribute to them. We can feel threatened by a too anxious scrutiny of our work, which can spill over into a demand for political correctness. This kind of policing has a paralysing effect on the creative flow.

The temptation then is to back away from

doing anything which might cause offence and provoke criticism.

Too much banging of the drum can be counter-productive. What's the solution? There's nothing worse than well-meaning but plodding attempts to plant token kids in wheelchairs in every text or picture, but not all of us can write about disability from our own experience.

My own experience dates from my earliest years. My brother Alastair was born when I was four years old. The bones of his skull were malformed, and he developed hydrocephalus, making his skull grow very large. This caused multiple disabilities.

It was post-war Britain, and our family had just arrived from New Zealand. We found London a cold, dark, unhappy place. The arrival of a frail, delicate fifth child, who needed an exhausting level of committed care, wore my mother out.

I was jealous of Alastair. I used to pinch him to make him cry. I don't remember him crying much, though. I think he tired easily. He died when I was seven. On the morning of that

day, I climbed on to my father's knee as he sat in total dejection on the bottom stair.

"I'm the youngest now, aren't I Daddy?" I said, with dispassionate, childish self-interest. Later I crept upstairs, against instructions, and examined my dead brother, touching his cold hair. At his funeral, which took place at home, I felt excited, staring round at all the solemn people and kicking my heels against the piano stool. I didn't care that my older brother and sisters were glowering at me, outraged by my callousness.

More than thirty years later, out of the blue, I decided to write about a child like Alastair, in a novel which became *Red Sky in the Morning*. I sat down at my desk and tried to remember everything I could about him. Memories that had long been buried came to the surface with extraordinary clarity. I didn't feel guilty about the indifference I had shown as a child, but I was overwhelmed by grief for him. I remembered only the sweet and lovely things, how he would laugh at dogs who came past the garden gate, how he would pull books off the bottom shelf and look round at us with a naughty smile, how musical he was. He never learned to speak, or sing, but music calmed him and he would beat perfect

(Continued on page 8)

**Writers and
Disability**

Elizabeth Laird

Seashores, Strands and Edges

Exploring the Margins in *Waterbound* and *Secret Songs*

by Jane Stemp

I began my first book, *Waterbound* (1995) in response to a quotation from Ursula Le Guin:

In her book *Knowing Woman*, Irene Claremont de Castillejo writes: 'Woman, who is so intimately and profoundly concerned with life, takes death in her stride. For her, to rid herself of an unwanted foetus is as much in accord with nature as for a cat to refuse milk to a weakling kitten' ... [S]he offers an example of natural, unperverted feminine morality: 'I have been struck with the spontaneous reaction of so many women and girls to the thalidomide tragedies. So often they exclaim with absolute conviction, "Of course they should be aborted! It is criminal to make a woman carry a deformed child.'"

Whatever the morality is here, whatever the other arguments that are tangled in the discussion; emotionally, to me, this is someone who doesn't admit the validity of living with a disability—someone who never seems to have imagined what might, for example, be the feelings of a feminist herself affected by thalidomide, on reading this passage.

I live with cerebral palsy. After restraining myself from hurling the book across the room—I wasn't mine—I sat down and wrote the first page of *Waterbound*. I wanted to put the other side of the argument, and this was the beginning. In the end the book became a very long answer to Le Guin, and de Castillejo, and, along the way, to all the science fiction writers whose otherwise sensitive treatment of disability is marred by the miracle cure: for example, André Norton's *Ware hawk* (1989).

Waterbound is set in a culture where, to quote one of its main characters, Sophie:

'people who might not be able to contribute to a life that was designed against them... since they in the City were all, heaven help us, normal... officially die when they are born. The parents are told their baby can't be saved. Unofficially—if the baby is one of the lucky ones—it ends up down here' [p.73].

'Here' is the world of the *Waterbound*: 'As in binding oath, band of hope, bounden duty, homeward bound, housebound. Going somewhere, stopped from going somewhere. Us.' [pp.34-36]

So there I was, writing out of rage. But that did not stop me enjoying myself. The shape of the book is based on up/down, journeys mirroring each other, the importance of being able to play with words. At the same time I was also trying to establish connections over the edge. As

Rosemary Sutcliff said:

There's a great loneliness about having any kind of handicap in a world which in general doesn't, however much you get to the stage where neither you nor anybody else notices. You tend to create somebody on your side of the barrier who will talk your own language.

When I created *Secret Songs* (1997), I was, among other things, playing a game again. Although the story behind it (from a Scottish folk song) fuelled the plot, I particularly wanted, as a writer, to explore being on the same side of the barrier as someone with a hearing impairment; expressing audible, or rather inaudible, terms in the written word, which (for fiction) I have always considered primarily a visual tool. The central character of *Secret Songs*, Ceri, who is hard of hearing, loves listening to whale-song:

The sound began again, swirling like water. She loaded some green paint onto her brush and pulled it across the paper. Here was where she felt at home, in the undersea country she had been painting for years. Where the twittering sounds of human speech were little and unimportant, because meaning flowed through the water in the tides and currents. Ceri felt that she would never need words there, because none of the sounds needed to be understood: which was why she painted it, because she could never find the right words anyway. [p.9]

Sometimes language—or ignorance—or not being able to get hold of the knowledge you need—make the barrier. Ceri, asked why she hasn't learnt sign language, replies:

'Mum said I didn't need to.'

'You should,' Ruth said, laying her plate aside. 'In the States it's a language option in high school—lots of kids learn it.'

'But not here,' Ceri said. 'And I didn't say I didn't want to. Mum said I didn't need to, and that was that. I'd learn it if I could.' She handed her plate over silently for more fish, and went on, 'They thought it would be a good idea if I went to a club for the deaf. So I went. Full of people doing nothing but sign. Ignored me because I couldn't.'

'Surely not,' Ruth said.

'How do you know? And anyway, why should I go be separate? Teenager just like the rest,' Ceri said, feeling language skid on her tongue as it so often did when she started to get angry. 'Too deaf to be hearing and not deaf enough to be deaf.'

Know where the edge is, and you may find a barrier, or maybe a border to cross—to find out where you belong. To go back to *Waterbound* for a moment: for Sophie this knowledge isn't

Seashores, Strands and Edges (continued)

important, and we can see that this is because she knows who she is:

'What's your other name, Sophie?'

'I don't know,' Sophie said. 'I never wanted to know. Would you?'

'Yes,' Gem said.

'Why?' Sophie asked. 'So you had someone to blame?' There was something like a sneer in her voice.

'I'd want to know who I was.'

'I know that well enough without a family name,' Sophie said. [p.103]

For Ceri in *Secret Songs*, the sense of belonging is uncertain, divided:

'And here I am. Neither hearing nor deaf, neither English nor American. Between.' Ceri curled up over the book as if it were a pain she held to herself. 'How do I find where I belong?' [p.114]

As a writer I attempt to describe this dilemma. I want people to understand my language. Those who aren't even aware that I and people like me are out here behind a border – I want to make them hear. Those who are already listening – I want to make them understand. I led such a 'normal' childhood, that it was a long

time before I met any other disabled people, let alone aligned myself with them. My cerebral palsy is relatively mild; my hearing loss is not severe, certainly not enough to make me feel at home in Deaf culture. I have had to adjust sometimes to living on the edge of not one but two worlds: hearing/deaf, able/disabled. But at least I do know where I belong, as Ceri eventually does:

'So here I am. Neither deaf nor hearing; just myself... going home.' After a while she found a clean sheet in her sketch-pad and began to write. *Dear Sir, I would like to learn sign language. Is it too late? ...* [p.199]

A final remark: once, I was lamenting the problems of marginalisation with a scholar who researches writing and reading practices of eighteenth-century women of colour. She remarked, 'Ah, but you see, in my work all the important things happen in the margins. It's where writers react and argue and debate; where you see new things working themselves out.' So now I like to think that being on the edge has its advantages.

Through Eastern Eyes: The Art of the Japanese Picture Book

by Shirley Hobson

As part of the Japan 2001 Festival, the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature organised an inspiring exhibition of leading contemporary Japanese children's picture books. The show, which features original artworks and a large selection of books in both Japanese and English translation, has been viewed at the Birmingham Central Library, The Royal National Theatre in London and is at the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle until 3rd November. In conjunction with the exhibition, various educational events have been organised around the country, including story telling and workshops with illustrators. There was also an illustrated lecture given by Dr. Tomoko Masaki, one of the exhibition curators. An invited audience, which included illustrators, authors, academics and publishers were treated to a richly illuminated insight into the cultural traditions of the arts and crafts movement in Japan. This event took place at the Daiwa Foundation HQ in London and was followed by a lively discussion.

The exhibition itself is important in that it enables us to view images hitherto unseen in this country. Whereas English picture books from Beatrix Potter to those of the present day are well known, treasured and widely available in Japan, the same cannot be said in reverse. We, in this country, have largely been unaware of the varied and distinctive picture books being printed in Japan. It is clear to see from this exhibition that the tradition of dramatic perspective, bold lines, strong colours and subtle washes, use of texture and the carefully left white space are the hallmarks of Japanese art and design. It is reassuring to see that the generation of illustrators represented here continues to draw upon these skills both emotionally and technically.

**Through Eastern
Eyes**

Shirley Hobson

Missing Mum

by Kathy Saunders

One of my most fulfilling parental privileges was the opportunity to read books with my young children. Infinitely varied conversations were sparked by the virtual world that came to us with the wide range of texts we enjoyed.

Occasional picture books struck particularly familiar chords. The children were delighted by Verna Wilkins' *Boots for a Bridesmaid* and *Are We There Yet?* (Tamarind 1995), which illustrated a child who, like them, had a parent who used a wheelchair. When Scholastic imported Jane Cowan-Fletcher's *Mama Zooms* (1993), we could only reminisce about when they were small enough for wheelchair rides on my lap, and they readily interpreted the implications of using a wheelbarrow to carry mother in Margaret Mahy's *The Man whose Mother was a Pirate* (1996, Puffin).

More gaps appeared between their experience of family life and representations in story as Junior progressed to Young Adult Fiction. Among the vast body of fictitious parents, who might be either supportive or inept and cantankerous, we found none with hearing, sight, mobility or co-ordination impairments who in real life go to work, help with homework and generally smooth the way through the normal turbulence of childhood just like non-disabled parents.

A few disabled child characters were described with abilities and attitudes that mirrored ours. More often, plots involving disabled adults would be improbable and poorly observed. I had to explain to my children that without the dire situations provided by various sources of practical or emotional conflict, one of which was legitimately childhood or parental illness, many children's stories would not be told. Satisfactory endings require a resolution to the

conflict but typically this is limited to the protagonist maturing to 'accept' the situation or the healing of an illness.

However, I had to emphasise that, in real life, disabled adults can plan to avoid such crises arising in a way that non-disabled people who are suddenly ill cannot. It is a question of time and our lifestyle is beyond the span of the average children's book.

The children learnt to recognise stories of parental illness, such as Phillip Ridley's *Krindlekrax* (1991, Jonathan Cape) in which the parents were depressed and alcoholic, Charles Ashton's *The Giant's Boot*, (1996, Walker) in which mother recovers from an unspecified severe illness, the relatively numerous stories involving parental cancer as typified by Jean Little's *Mama's Gonna Buy You a Mocking Bird* (Puffin, out of print) and a more recent surge of parental mental health problems such as Rosie Rushton's *Tell Me I'm All Right Really* (Piccadilly, 2000) and Jan Mark's *The Lady with Iron Bones* (Walker, 2000). The children can easily differentiate these books from those featuring parents who are

disabled but not ill—by the complete absence of the latter.

New perspectives are offered by disabled adult characters in constructive roles, especially as parents. They would have resonance with many children, not least those who are disabled and anticipate parenthood themselves. A rich seam of storylines is waiting to be explored.

(Kathy Saunders coordinates the National Centre for Disabled Parents, telephone 0800 018 4730, and is the author of Happy Ever Afters – a storybook guide to teaching children about disability, Trentham Books, 2000, ISBN 1-85856-213-9)

“New perspectives are offered by disabled adult characters in constructive roles, especially as parents...”

Writer's Dilemma - Continued from page 8

Mother sent us out with his pram to give him an airing 'round the block'. And when he died, people said, 'What a mercy. All for the best, really.'

That's not how we saw it. Alastair was our brother. One of us. A limb on the tree of the family.

I feel privileged to have had a brother like Alastair, but what can writers do when they don't have that personal experience? A few years ago, some of us tried to address this problem by seeking out some disabled children, getting to know them and helping them to write their own stories. In the resulting collection, entitled *Me and My Electric* (published by Mammoth), seven young disabled people speak their minds in no uncertain terms. Somehow, we need to find ways to make voices like theirs heard.

“Less Real Awake”:

Growing up with Learning Difficulties in Children's Fiction

by Jenny Kendrick

However the subject of learning difficulties is approached in children's fiction, there is a particular issue which writers, readers and critics must all acknowledge: how, exactly, is it possible to represent the internal world of a character whose disability puts into question the scope of that internal world?

Of the forty or so children's fiction titles including a character with learning difficulties which are or have been available in the UK, most make no attempt to enter the mind of the disabled character, using him or her only as a catalyst for another character's development.

The very few which, like Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, venture beyond the easy stereotype, tackle equally serious issues, such as manhood and desire.

Eva, the focaliser of *Gideon Ahoy!* (1987) by William Mayne, says of Gideon, 'This is a man, and my brother, and he is more real asleep and less real awake' (p. 52). Not only is this a profound observation of the difference between Gideon's physical development and his behaviour, it is also indicative, for people with learning difficulties and their fictional representatives, of the perhaps inevitable tension between maturation and dependence.

Physically, Gideon bears the signifiers of young manhood, and the narrative burden of this text is the interrogation of Gideon's behaviour and developing selfhood to find out if, and how far, it bears the interpretation of manhood.

Mayne clearly illustrates the dichotomy between needs and interests: there is a noticeable tension between Gideon's inability to become truly independent and his desire to be grown-up. Gideon's deficiencies in understanding are believably portrayed: he does not understand the passage of time, for example, which is only 'now or never' to him (p. 10), and therefore cannot predict the future or understand the consequences of his actions.

On the one hand, Gideon may need support to manage everyday tasks like toileting and bathing, and may be distractible and

strong-willed, but at the same time, his desire to take his place as an adult is demonstrated by his altered behaviour after he starts work. He learns new tasks and invents new words relating to the pleasure barge on which he is a deckhand, which Eva has 'not heard before,' and which mean, 'I hope you have had a pleasant trip and will come again' (p. 42).

Rachel Anderson, in a story in *The Bus People* (1989) explores the same territory in a different way. Micky is less able than Gideon; he can neither speak nor make his limbs obey him, and since he is limited to the chair in which he sits and over which he has no control, he cannot choose, as other young men would, what to do or where to go. Anderson's choice of signs are perforce transmuted into thoughts and dreams of 'the touch of flesh' (p. 21), and the raw symbolism of the splints which hold his legs straight, compared to the 'third lower limb ... growing in strength' (p. 23). When she feeds him, his

mother 'flirts' the spoon on Micky's lips (p. 24), but he is no longer satisfied with food and mothers, he wants the adult male signs he sees in the bedroom of a young man when he is assessed at a residential college—posters of 'people and guns and thighs and unexpected folds in the flesh' (p.28). The ultimate irony is the sign by which Micky knows himself: the legend on his sweatshirt (and he knows nothing of football) reads 'MAN CITY':

But can he recognise his own written name? Yes, I know my own written name.

I am Man City. (p. 29)

“How is it possible to represent the internal world of a character whose disability puts into question the scope of that internal world?”

Bibliography

Anderson, R. (1989) *The Bus People*
Oxford: Oxford University Press

Mayne, W. (1987) *Gideon Ahoy!*
Harmondsworth: Viking Kestrel (winner, Boston
Globe - Horn Book Honor Award 1989)

**Disability in
Children's Books**
Jenny Kendrick

The Representation of Disabled Characters in Selected Children's Fiction

by Isobel Walker

Books containing disabled characters in children's fiction, according to several publishing houses, are unpopular, do not warrant large print runs and consequently are soon out of print. However, with the disabled population ever increasing, there is a need for such books, in order to inform the public, to aid integration and to accommodate the reading needs of disabled children. In an attempt to discover how valid the assumptions about unpopularity are, I carried out a study of the reactions of children in both mainstream and 'complex needs' classes to six picture books, in some of which disabled characters are depicted, while in the others equality issues are to the forefront. The books, of which bibliographic details are supplied at the end, were:

- *A Nice Walk in the Jungle*, in which Miss Jellaby's class, including a boy in a wheelchair, are all in turn swallowed by a boa constrictor—but all are eventually rescued.
- *Are we there yet?*, which features a father taking his children to a leisure park. He is a wheelchair user but no explicit reference is made to this in the text.
- *Cleversticks*, in which a boy who feels he has no special talent is shown to have a special ability to use chopsticks.
- *Jessy and the Bridesmaid's Dress*, in which the family dog devastates the dress of a Downs syndrome girl shortly before she is due to wear it, though fortunately it can be repaired.
- *Lucy's Picture*, where a small girl makes a tactile picture for her visually handicapped grandfather.
- *Tusk Tusk*, a story of hostility between black and the white elephants.

I was interested to see how far the children would detect the underlying ideology of the books, and the extent to which they might display preferences for particular texts. The two schools chosen were both in middle-class areas. The first catered for an age range of four to eleven; the second, which had a complex needs unit attached, ranged from four to seven. The mainstream children were drawn from Years Two and Three, while the other children were of a similar age range.

While it is impossible to do more than mention some of the findings briefly here, it is apparent that the representation of disability proved quite a minor

feature in determining the children's preferences. They liked the humour of *A Nice Walk in the Jungle*, the only specific reference to the wheelchair being concerned with the boa constrictor's swallowing powers. Some of the children were at first unaware of Jessy's disability in *Jessy and the Bridesmaid's Dress*; there is no doubt that it is much easier for picture book artists to foreground mobility problems than those involving either Downs syndrome or perceptual difficulties. In fact, differences in the children's enjoyment of the books seem to be far more gender-linked than in any way related to the theme of disability, girls evidencing a preference for *Jessy* and *Lucy*, while mainstream boys liked the conflict aspect of *Tusk Tusk*.

Interestingly, the responses of the boys in the 'complex needs' unit differed from the other boys about this book, which was also disliked by their female classmates; both sexes seemed anxious about the fighting between the white and the black elephants, an aspect which may reflect a greater degree of emotional vulnerability in these children.

On the whole, the reactions of these younger readers towards the disabled characters were indistinguishable from those towards other figures in the texts. A slightly disquieting element however was that their ensuing discussions about disability issues revealed a tendency towards pity and a feeling that the characters concerned were in some way different from 'us'. It seems to me that authors who envisage young children as the audience for their portrayal of disabled characters have some responsibility to show them engaged in the same kind of challenging, fulfilling tasks and employment as everyone else, in order to attempt to move away from the perception of them as pitiable, long-suffering and dependent.

Books discussed

- Anderson, R. & McNicholas, S. (1993) *Jessy and the Bridesmaid's Dress*, London: Harper Collins
- Ashley, B. & Brazell, D. (1993) *Cleversticks*, London: Harper Collins
- Bodsworth, N. (1989) *A Nice Walk in the Jungle*, Harmondsworth: Penguin
- McKee, D. (1978) *Tusk Tusk*, London: Random House
- Moon, N. & Aycliffe, A. (1995) *Lucy's Picture*, London: Orchard Books
- Wilkins, V, McLeod, G., & Willey, L (1995) *Are we there yet?* Camberley: Tamarind

(Isobel Walker is herself visually handicapped. Her MA thesis, which describes her research project fully, may be read at University of Surrey Roehampton)

OUP Books about Disability

Rachel Anderson, *Warlands*

Paperback, March 2001, Paperback, 128 pages, ISBN 019275128X

Rachel Anderson, *The Doll's House*

Rachel Anderson, *Paper Faces*

Paperback, forthcoming January 2001, 128 pages, ISBN 0192751654

Rachel Anderson, *The Scavenger's Tale*

new edition June 2000, Paperback, 144 pages, ISBN 0192750224

Rachel Anderson, *War Orphan*

new edition June 2000. Paperback, 272 pages, ISBN 019275095X

Jay Ashton, *Killing the Demons*

Paperback, 96 pages, ISBN 0192751107

Tim Bowler, *Midget*

new edition January 1999. Paperback, 144 pages, ISBN 0192750372

Gillian Cross, *Calling a Dead Man*

September 2001. Paperback, 252 pages, ISBN 0192718274

Ann Lazim writes:

Gillian Cross's new teenage novel is set in Siberia. When Hayley's brother is killed in an explosion, she and his fiancée Annie Glasgow travel to Russia to discover what really happened. Annie does not allow the fact that she is in a wheelchair deter her from the arduous journey. This feisty, determined and frequently bad-tempered character is certainly no stereotype of the disabled heroine dispensing sweetness and light to those around her!

Stephen Elboz, *The House of Rats*

new edition June 2001. Paperback, 136 pages, ISBN 0192750216

Ishbel Moore, *Daughter*

September 2001. Paperback, 156 pages, ISBN 0192718746

Helena Pielichaty, *Jade's Story*

Paperback, 160 pages. ISBN 019271841X

Jim Riordan, *Sweet Clarinet*

new edition November 1999. Paperback, 140 pages, ISBN 019275050X

Pamela Scobie, *Chasing Faces*

Paperback, 160 pages, ISBN 0192718495

Sue Welford, *Night After Tomorrow*

new edition September 2000. Paperback, 160 pages, ISBN 0192751085

ELEANOR FARJEON AWARD

At a ceremony at the Royal Over-Seas League on Monday 1st October, this year's Eleanor Farjeon Award was presented to **Amelia Edwards**, for many years Artistic Director at Walker Books, of which she was also a founder member in 1978. She has nurtured a wide range of illustrators and designers; among the illustrators who have benefited from association with her are Helen Oxenbury, Jill Murphy, Nicola Bayley, Charlotte Voake, Patrick Benson, Jane Ray and many others. One of the assets of an award such as this is that it draws attention to the people behind the scenes, whose names do not appear on book jackets, but whose work is indispensable to the production of high quality children's literature. Our congratulations to Amelia!

Books

**Eleanor Farjeon
Award**

Autumn 2001 - 11

Disability in 19th and 20th century Children's Literature

by Ann Dowker, Dept. of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford

Many 19th and 20th century children's books include characters with temporary or permanent disabilities. Examples include Alcott's *Little Men* * (1871) and *Jack and Jill** (1880), Coolidge's *What Katy Did* *(1875), Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), Porter's *Pollyanna* *(1913) and Spyri's *Heidi* (1885). My present discussion will be confined to portrayals of children and adolescents with physical disabilities. Adults, and characters with intellectual or emotional impairments, such as Colin in Burnett's *The Secret Garden* *(1911), are excluded.

Some disabled characters in books published between 1837 and 1914 are 'saintly invalids', who seem to have little personality. Examples include Tiny Tim in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Carol in Wiggin's *The Birds' Christmas Carol** (1891), Dick in Alcott's *Little Men*, and Lucinda Snow, whose story is told as an inspiration to Jill in Alcott's *Jack and Jill*. Some but not all of such characters are clearly 'too good to live'. Disability, usually of a temporary nature, is often seen as a means of spiritual discipline (see Lois Keith's recent book, *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk*). A headstrong child, often a tomboyish girl, is injured, often through recklessness or disobedience, and learns discipline through weeks or months of suffering and relative immobility. The best-known example is that of Katy in *What Katy Did*; Cousin Helen, permanently disabled by an accident some years ago, tells Katy that God has allowed her (like Helen herself) to study in the 'School of Pain', where she can learn lessons in 'Patience' and 'Making the Best of Things', and become the 'Heart of the House'. A somewhat similar theme occurs in Alcott's *Jack and Jill* and in Hart's less well-known *Daisy's Dilemmas* (1900). In *Pollyanna*, temporary disability is not seen as discipline for Pollyanna herself (she is already good) but for her aunt and various friends and neighbours.

The exact medical nature of the disability is often unclear. It is clearest in two cases where children have to undergo the amputation of a foot: in Martineau's *The Crofton Boys* (1841), Hugh Proctor's foot is crushed in an accident, while Geraldine Underwood in Yonge's *The Pillars of the House* (1873) undergoes this drastic surgery to cure her of a serious illness, presumably

tuberculosis of the bone. In most cases, however, the characters are either simply described as 'lame', or, most commonly, have experienced some form of unspecified accidental injury to the spine. Where some medical explanation is attempted, the emphasis is on 'inflammation' of the injured area; it is perhaps not appropriate however even to attempt to interpret most of these stories in terms of medical realism.

Examining the role of disabled characters in early children's books reveals a fairly complex picture. Firstly, the School of Pain is co-educational. Boys as well as girls grow, learn and become disciplined through suffering. Hugh in *The Crofton Boys* and Leonard in Ewing's *The Story of a Short Life* (1885) are outstanding examples of learning control of temper and cheerfulness.

Ferdy in Molesworth's *The Oriel Window* (1896), whose temper is already controlled, uses his period of suffering to learn to perform 'good works' in the community.

The main difference between the treatment of girls and boys is that there is more stress on girls learning to be useful to their families, and on boys developing and demonstrating courage (a difference not, of course, confined to books featuring disabled characters). In *The Story of a Short*

Life, Leonard at first reacts to the pain and disability caused by his spinal injury by being peevish and irritable, sometimes to the point of physical violence, beating a servant with his crutch. However, he comes to bear his pain bravely, partly through the exhortations of his mother, who tells him that though he may not become a brave soldier, he can be 'a brave cripple.'

Secondly, the School of Pain is not confined to disability, the treatment of which must be seen in the broader context of the ways in which misfortunes were often treated as bestowed by God for the ultimate good of the individual. It is frequently emphasized that seeming misfortunes must be accepted as part of a higher plan: an attitude starkly expressed in 'Rabbits' Tails', a short story in Gatty's *Aunt Judy's Tales* (1859), where the narrator says of two young orphans: 'Had it indeed been right for the children that their mother should have lived, she would not

“Disability, usually of a temporary nature, is often seen as a means of spiritual discipline.”

Disability in Children's Literature (continued)

have been taken away'. In Yonge's *Heartsease* (1854), the young mother of a delicate premature baby is comforted by her brother-in-law: 'One who loves him better than even you do... may be disciplining him for future life, or fitting him for brighter glory.'

Although this emphasis on submitting to the will of God is certainly a strong feature of the treatment of disabled characters, the non-disabled characters must also submit to the will of God. In Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* (1856), Margaret must submit to invalidism and loss of her hopes for marriage, but her sister Ethel also renounces any hope of marriage, as well as learning the discipline imposed by her sex: lack of intellectual fulfillment and the performance of uncongenial ladylike duties. Their sister Flora, too secure in her self-esteem, must learn spiritual discipline through even worse suffering when her baby dies through mismanagement by the nanny to whom Flora had left her care.

Thirdly, disabled characters are not always treated as helpless pitiable creatures or as saintly invalids. Though the hero of Keary's *Sidney Grey* (1857) is very much in the saintly-invalid class, Louis, in Keary's *Mia and Charlie* (1856), is portrayed as clever, brave and resourceful but short-tempered and irritable. Tony Pembury in Reed's *Fifth Form at St Dominic's* (1887) is a

clever, witty, often sarcastic boy who uses his verbal skills to gain influence and power in the schoolboy world. Geraldine Underwood in Yonge's *The Pillars of the House* is an intelligent, sensitive girl with a pronounced artistic talent, an aspect just as significant as her invalid status.

Daisy in Hart's *Daisy's Dilemmas* is not only headstrong and wild, but spoilt, selfish and in many ways a bully. In many ways this is a 'School of Pain' story, but Daisy's spinal injury does not in itself reform her, so much as her increasing awareness of the kindness of people whom she had previously mistreated.

Fourthly, the disabled characters do not invariably either get cured or die. Many are only partially cured, or survive with an unchanged mild or severe disability, which in many cases does not prevent them from leading interesting lives

and pursuing careers. For instance, Reed's Tony Pembury's lameness does not prevent him from being the editor of a national journal, and 'everyone wants to be on good terms with an editor.' Most impressive of all is the outcome for Dinah Mulock's 'Little Lame Prince' (1875), a somewhat allegorical fantasy with a fairly realistic ending. The prince defeats his own and his country's enemies and is restored to the throne. His lameness is 'never cured', but does not prevent him from being a greatly respected and successful King, establishing many important reforms, including the abolition of the death penalty.

Thus, the treatment of disability in 19th and early 20th century children's literature is more complex than it appears at first sight.

Although disability was indeed sometimes seen, like all misfortunes and hardships, as providing spiritual discipline, disabled characters were not always completely transformed into stereotypical 'saintly invalids'. Partly this may reflect variations across time and place, or in the personalities of the writers and their own direct or vicarious experience of disability. The same author may deal very differently with disabled characters in different books.

It is interesting that the portrayal of disabled characters as saintly invalids, or as headstrong girls being tamed through

the discipline of suffering, seems more prevalent in the surviving books than in those long out-of-print. 19th century books currently in print reflect not only the attitudes of the authors and of 19th century readers, but also those of the later readers who have kept them in print. The saintly invalid and the tamed headstrong girl may, after all, have been demanded as much or more by the 20th century reader than by the 19th century reader.

** indicates books originally published in the USA (first mention only)*

(This paper is based on a talk given at the Children's Literature International Summer School at Roehampton University of Surrey, August 15th, 2001)

Disability in *Bookbird*

by Pat Pinsent

By coincidence, the recent issue of *Bookbird*, the international journal of IBBY, is devoted to the subject of Disability and Children's Books—I did not know this when I suggested that it be the theme of this issue of the British Newsletter, but it clearly signals the growing realisation that this subject cannot be ignored. In order to whet your appetite for *Bookbird*, I am briefly summarising some of the articles, which are very informative about the treatment of disability in other countries.

Meena Khorana's 'To the Reader' column starts the discussion by reminding us that we are concerned with both books *for* children with special needs and books *about* children with disabilities: 'Children with disabilities have a right to equal access to books that will help build language and concepts and provide aesthetic pleasure.' Such books may well employ 'sign language, Braille, sense of touch, or pictorial symbolism.'

Many adult readers well versed in children's literature may well find themselves challenged in assessing the qualities of books which use quite different formats from those to which we are accustomed. Nina Askvig Reidarson, author of *Outstanding Books for Children with Disabilities* (University of Oslo, 1999) points out the impossibility of making a 'blueprint of what is a suitable book,' for 'a serviceable production of books must be based on a profound knowledge of special needs combined with literary and artistic competence, and only a wide range of such easily available books can match the music of the "different drummers."'

Among the books she highlights are a Danish book about octopuses, using nonsense verses, which invites deaf children to play with hand shapes and facial positions; a Norwegian book designed for blind children and tracing the adventures on the page of a tiny round hole; a Swiss picture book making extensive use of symbolism and accessible to readers who find words and concepts difficult to understand; as well as a number of 'mainstream' picture books whose clarity makes them particularly appropriate to the needs of a range of children.

What is most useful for the reader who may not have access to the books she specifically discusses is her focus on their qualities, which could sharpen our own perception of relevant aspects of books more familiar to us. Reidarson concludes that the objectives of charters on human rights will only be met if the subject of appropriate books for children with disabilities is taken seriously, receiving emphasis in the training of teachers and librarians: 'It is actually a

question of giving priority to groups of young people who always have had to fight for their rights.'

In her article, 'The Reason for Disability', Karen Coats suggests that in many instances, disabled characters appear in children's novels not in their own right but as catalysts triggering the development towards maturity (often within a gendered context) of their 'normal' siblings, to 'shore up the identity of a centered [*sic*], autonomous, self-reliant individual.'

She finds, however, that there are some books which, in the tradition of the classic *The Wheel on the School* (Meindert de Jong, 1954), show the disabled person becoming part of a community rather than always on the margins of society; as examples she mentions Virginia Hamilton's *Bluish* (New York, 1999) and Nan Gregory's *How Smudge Came* (Red Deer, Alta, 1995). Coats is however aware of the limitations of even these books: 'Rather than setting people in a place of unquestioned human value regardless of the status of their embodiment, we still figure that the disabled among us must be here for a reason.'

'*How Smudge Came*, the story of the loss and retrieval of a puppy, is also discussed by Nina Christensen in her evaluation of books depicting characters with Down's syndrome. Christensen welcomes the fact that in this book, unlike most of those considered, the character's disability is not the main theme, although incidentally she is shown as being 'able to function socially with other people, to have a job, and to get around on her own.'

The conclusion of Barbara Haberl's survey of German and Austrian fiction featuring disabled protagonists certainly reinforces the impressions derived by the writers named above:

People with disabilities are portrayed most frequently as outsiders and misfits, people who are dependent on the help, support, and protection of the community. Only occasionally are disabled characters in fictional accounts granted the opportunity to actively influence the course of events; instead, the stories usually portray people with disabilities as passive recipients of the charity of non-disabled characters.

These articles are supported by several shorter studies: Massoud Naseri on 'Disability in Iranian Children's Literature'; Eve Tal's attempt to establish criteria for evaluating children's literature about disability; and Kjersti Engebretsen's account of

(Continued on page 16)

Write Away!

New Online Magazine for Teachers and Children

by Nikki Gamble

Nikki Gamble, Director of the *Write Away Project* has teamed up with Ultralab at Anglia Polytechnic University and the highly talented web designer/artist Lynda Mangoro to launch the exciting new online magazine *WRITE AWAY!*

The magazine will give real support to Key Stage 2/3 teachers in the imaginative and creative implementation of the English/Literacy Curriculum totally free of charge. The site will be visually and aurally appealing. Interviews, features and reviews will use the latest animation, photographs, video and audio clips. Material and ideas for class discussions and projects relevant to the National Curriculum and National Literacy Strategy will be provided in abundance.

Write Away! will be hyper-linked to and from key children's literature and educational websites. The site will be tested by participating schools in the second half of the autumn term 2001 and launched in January 2002.

Write Away! magazine is divided into three areas: News Pages, Teachers' Centre, and Young Writers' Pages.

1. News Pages (with regular updates)

News

- News; events, people, organisations
- Curriculum developments
- Conference postings

Reviews

- Children's books 7-10; picture books, fiction, poetry, non-fiction
- Children's books 11-14; picture books, fiction, poetry, non-fiction
- Children's Multimedia; audio books, video, CD ROM, websites
- Teacher's books; literature, language, literacy
- Teaching Resources; text books, broadcasts, teacher's notes

E-Mailing List

- Registration to receive site updates

2. Teachers' Centre (new pages added each term)

Theme Feature

- Issue 1: Fantasy Fictions
- Issue 2: The Art of Anthologising
- Issue 3: Arthurian Legends

Author Feature

- Interview focusing on writing processes, inspirations, personal reflections
- Links to publisher's site for readers wanting to purchase books
- Book extracts, audio clips
- Interactive space: questions to the author (mediated by the site manager)

Teaching Ideas

- Theme notes
- Themed ideas for lesson planning linked to the NC and NLS
- Cross-curricular links
- Interactive space for teachers to post teaching suggestions
- Photographs of classroom displays

Theme Resource List

- Suggestions for shared and guided reading
- Teachers' books
- Audio, visual, multimedia resources
- Hyper-links to related sites

A World of Literature

- Featuring international projects, organisation, writers

Archive

- Back issues archived thus building up a considerable resource bank over time

3. Young Writers' Pages (new pages added each term)

Writing Competition

- Interactive link for submission of entries
- Winning entries and other selected pieces

Notice Board

- Children's recommended reads
- Other submissions

Writing surgery

- Advice for young writers

Further information available from:
Nikki Gamble, Write Away!
nhgamble@cs.com

Write Away!

Nikki Gamble

CALENDAR & EVENTS

A reminder for new and old readers...

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

MULTILINGUALISM CONFERENCE

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

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

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

7th, 8th & 9th January, 2002, University of Reading

CHILDREN'S FANTASY FICTION: Debates for the Twenty-First Century

Venue: Bulmershe College, University of Reading.

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

22nd-25th May, 2002, in Leuven, Belgium

RELIGION, CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH LITERATURE AND MODERNITY IN EUROPE, 1750-2000

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

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

New Events:

13th-15th September, 2002, College of Ripon and York, St. John, York

ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY: THEOLOGY, LITERATURE AND FILM

With a panel on Ethics and Children's Literature

Contact Gaye Ortiz, College of Ripon and York St John, Lord Mayor's Walk, York, YO31 7EX;

g.ortiz@ucrysj.ac.uk

29 September to 3 October 2002, in Basel, Switzerland

28th IBBY CONGRESS

The theme for the next biennial IBBY congress is *Children and Books: A Worldwide Challenge*

Among the highlights are the celebration of 50 years of IBBY with words and music, the presentation of medals to the 2002 Hans Christian Andersen Award winners, and exhibitions reflecting IBBY's main involvements. Keynote speeches will be given by Peter von Matt (Professor of German Literature in Zurich); Lilia Ratcheva-Stratieva, a Bulgarian publisher, writer and translator; Ana Maria Machado, a recent Andersen Award winner from Brazil; Jeffrey Garrett, an editor-in-chief of *Bookbird*; Nouchine Ansari, Professor of Librarianship from Iran; and Jostein Gaarder, the celebrated Norwegian author.

The congress concludes with an optional excursion to Lucerne. The main Congress language is English.

The registration fee excluding the excursion is CHF 700 (\$450).

Contact IBBY Secretariat, Nonneweg 12, Postfach, CH-4003 Basel, Switzerland. E-mail ibby@eye.ch

Disability in Bookbird (continued from page 14)

teaching dance to visually impaired people. Franz-Joseph Huainigg rounds off the issue by presenting his perspective as the author of ten books; as someone who is paralysed in both legs his intention 'is to offer strategies to arrive at solutions that suggest how to reduce insecurity and ignorance.'

Altogether this is an issue of *Bookbird* which many people will find absorbing. In order to obtain it or to subscribe to *Bookbird*, contact Anne Marie Corrigan, University of Toronto Press, 5201 Dufferin St., North York, Ontario, Canada, M3H 5T8. The subscription for members of IBBY National Sections is \$43 per annum for the four quarterly issues. You may arrange to be billed after receipt of your first issue, and may pay by credit card.