

Scotland and Children's Literature

Auld Scotland counts for something still
(Charles Murray, 1864–1941)

When we decided to devote this issue to 'Scotland and Children's Literature', I scarcely realised what a wealth of Scottish children's authors there are today, following in the footsteps of the Scottish-born 'greats' of children's literature like Ballantyne, Stevenson, Grahame and Barrie. It is clear that the tradition lives on, as evidenced by the many names in Pam Robson's list, whose work is also described in other articles. Notably, too, we are fortunate to have contributions from two such authors, Theresa Breslin and Nicola Morgan, revealing how much of their own inspiration comes from the country in which they live. We are also grateful to our other contributors, including Rachel Anderson, well-known for her novels about disability. A recent collection of Scottish children's poetry also demands mention, *The Thing that Mattered Most* (see reviews).

An argument could be made that each country in the British Isles has a particular literary strength. I don't mean that the writers from each country are the greatest in that genre, but rather that they have contributed something special and characteristic to the body of literature in English. I would cite Ireland (undivided in this aspect) for the plays of Sheridan, Goldsmith, Shaw, Yeats, Synge and O'Casey, with their poetic and individual use of language; Wales for the poetry (in English) of George Herbert and several others by the name of Herbert, Edward Thomas, Dylan Thomas and R. S. Thomas, Henry Vaughan, but not forgetting the influence of Welsh poetry on Hopkins and other English poets; and Scotland for children's literature. (No, I haven't forgotten that Shakespeare wasn't Scottish or Irish, nor the work of many great English novelists and dramatists.)

In the case of Scottish children's literature, I want to acknowledge the influence of Sir Walter Scott. Known to Ballantyne,

influential on Stevenson, often more celebrated on the continent than in Britain, Scott's works are too little read today, but it is difficult to imagine children's historical fiction having had anything like its strength without them. Whether *Ivanhoe*, *The Talisman*, *Kenilworth* and countless others were written for children, in their time they certainly delighted many young readers, as did later abridged and film versions of stories which may have contained rather too much unadulterated (and not always accurate!) historical information to attract later readers. But I would personally claim that encountering *Ivanhoe* at the age of nine taught me an invaluable lesson – how and when to skip passages that did not seem to be relevant to the story. While many of Scott's novels are not about Scotland at all, his greatest work, *The Heart of Midlothian*, is firmly set there, as indeed are his volumes of poetry and collections of minstrelsy.

So I'm delighted that this *IBBYLink* has the theme of Scotland, and hope that it will encourage readers unfamiliar with the treasures of Scottish literature to search them out.

Pat Pinsent

CONTENTS

- 2 **The Power of Place** Theresa Breslin
- 3 **Something in the Water?** Nicola Morgan
- 4 **My Heart's in the Highlands** Sara Grady
- 5 **Children's Literature in Scotland**
Maureen A. Farrell
- 6 **A Warning for the Future?** Jessica Yates
- 8 **A Celebration of Scottish Children's Literature** Shirley Neilson and Vanessa Robertson
- 9 **South Lanarkshire Book Awards 2007**
Rachel Anderson
- 11 **A Selection of Recent Titles** Pam Robson
- 15 **Reports**
- 17 **Reviews**
- 24 **IBBY News**
- 26 **Events, Conferences and Resources**

The Power of Place

Theresa Breslin

Being born in the middle of Scotland in the middle of the twentieth century meant that my childhood was mainly rural and mostly uneventful. We lived on the outskirts of a small town and our household was full of books: non-fiction on every topic – history, biographies, science and geography; and also a wide range of fiction – traditional folk and fairy tales, fables, myths and legends, stories of all kinds, plays and poetry. My father had a wonderful memory for poems and would recite these to amuse his children. My siblings and I especially loved the more melodramatic ones. Tales of slain heroes and doomed lovers were particularly popular!

We played outdoors a lot, with the nearby Campsie hills in constant view, their slopes beautiful in sun, shadow, or snow. Being close to the elements had a profound effect on me and I am acutely aware of the impact landscape has on character, as evidenced especially in *Remembrance* and *Saskia's Journey*. In *Remembrance* the young soldier, John Malcolm, experiences disorientation in the trenches of the Western Front, and the eponymous heroine of *Saskia's Journey* is aware of the sea 'rustling its skirts below her window'.

My home town, Kirkintilloch, was a fort on the Antonine Wall, one of the furthest northern points settled by the Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages, followers of Robert the Bruce held the castle for the king. This sense of history exhilarates me, and I find the artefacts our ancestors left behind fascinating. The burial grounds with their mysterious markings and ancient runes provided inspiration for *Whispers in the Graveyard*.

These sites were in the park close to my home where stood the local public library. One of my earliest childhood memories is being interviewed by the

Dragon Lady Librarian to see if I was suitable to be allowed to join! I was a voracious reader and gobbled anything and everything. But I did not find myself in any book and no one ever said to me that I could be writer. My best option on leaving schools was to choose a career as a librarian. And it was while working on the mobile library that I witnessed the devastation on a community wrought by the closure of a steel mill. I wrote my first book about this; it won an award for new writers and was filmed for television as a children's drama.

Thus I became a writer. I think now that I always was.

The enormous freedom about writing for young people is that I can write modern urban drama (*Divided City*), or a book set in medieval Italy (*The Medici Seal*), and as long as the story is satisfying my readers do not mind. Afterwards people categorise suitability, e.g. *Divided City* is highlighted under terms of 'boys, reading and citizenship'.

From an early age I was imbued with narrative and a love of language. For me Scotland is the source, not just the literal sense but also in the lyrical meaning – the headwaters, where a river rises, the spring bubbling underneath the earth. For words have more than practical use: they carry freight, they resonate at the frequency of the human spirit. Their impact is emotional, a phrase can transmute energy in addition to meaning.

And that is both personal and yet universal.

Theresa Breslin's work has been extensively filmed and translated, and has won many awards. She says she endeavours to combine powerful drama with memorable characters and vivid storytelling. More information can be found on her website: www.theresabreslin.co.uk.

The Spring 2008 issue of *IBBYLink* will largely be devoted to summaries of the papers given at the November 2007 IBBY conference, which takes an international perspective on children's book illustration.

Articles on other subjects, reviews, reports, information about conferences, etc. are, however, all welcomed.

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Something in the Water?

Nicola Morgan

Or, if you prefer stereotypes, the whisky? Maybe. For children's authors, Scotland is certainly an unbeatable home and our work is thriving. But who are we? What's a Scottish book? Are there reasons to move north now?

Who are we? Not necessarily Scottish, for a start. I'm an English–Welsh hybrid, but married a Scot and have lived here more than half my life. Alison Prince, Vivian French and Keith Gray are some of the other non-Scots who have made their home here. A Scottish author is simply one who either lives here, or who doesn't but is Scottish by birth or blood.

What's a Scottish book? At a meeting of Scottish authors and publishers, Gerry Johnson, MD of Waterstone's, said he didn't know. It's simple: a Scottish book is one written by a Scottish author. On the other hand, it is more complicated, as Johnson was hinting. But only if you confuse Scottish with 'local', believing that they must taste strongly of haggis and heather, be set in Scotland, tackle Scottish issues, or feature Scottish characters. These things are often present but are not necessary.

Inevitably, all authors bring their background, language, world-view and experience to their writing. So the experience of Scottishness and all it involves – politics, history, personality, landscape, weather, taste and smell – all meld into our books. But the flavour does not have to be strong, nor is it defining. Sometimes it is entirely undetectable.

Nor do Scottish books favour Scottish readers. When Bali Rai sets a book in Leicester, he doesn't mean people elsewhere to be a jot less interested. Even when spotlighting Scotland, stories are stories, and stand or fail on that alone. Who would be uninterested in Glasgow's religious divide, portrayed in Theresa Breslin's *Divided City*; Julie Bertagna's drowned world in *Exodus* and *Zenith*, seen through Mara and the author's overtly Glaswegian roots; or the gruesome suffering of the nineteenth century, portrayed in my *Fleshmarket*. Catherine MacPhail sets her stories mostly in Scotland, with Scottish characters, but they are not about Scotland. Vivian French sets hers

anywhere and everywhere, and throws her voice with a ventriloquist's skill. Catherine Forde's characters speak *with* a raw Scottish voice, yet speak *to* all modern teenagers. Most of Keith Gray's work is less explicitly Scottish, but equally universal, as are the multifarious books of the prolific Joan Lingard and Alison Prince. For younger children we have everything from the quintessentially Scottish *Maisie* books by Aileen Paterson, *Katie Morag* by Mairi Hedderwick and *Hamish McHaggis* by Linda Strachan, which all appeal equally to non-Scots, to the universally flavoured books of Julia Donaldson, Debi Gliori and Janey Jones. Then there are Gill Arbuthnot, Cathy Cassidy, Franziska Ewart, Diana Hendry, Charlie James, Jamie Jauncey, Alexander McCall Smith, Stephen Potts, Simon Puttock, Alan Temperley and Tom Pow, amongst many others, all Scottish authors yet all appealing equally south of the border. I need hardly mention J.K. Rowling. This is far from a local interest story.

Incidentally, we may or may not have Scottish publishers and agents – only their quality matters, not their geography. Ditto authors.

So, what's the point of the Scottish tag? Three points. (Southern publishers, incidentally, frequently and dismally fail to understand at least the first two.) First, the sense of community. Perhaps this comes from having a big, southern neighbour and the ensuing natural desire to stick together. But I think this community exists mainly because it can: with our small population, common experience, ease of meeting and the networks we can easily set up. Of course, we're British, and many feel British first; but all benefit from the Scottish tag, that community, that belonging. If the tag sometimes feels parochial, it's still useful and has meaning.

The BRAW network proves what can be achieved through the common aim that breeds community: it's Joan Lingard's baby, and in only three years has grown to powerful adulthood, administered and funded by Scottish Book Trust (SBT). Recently, we were told that the BRAW identity would disappear with the restructuring of SBT – but an empas-

sioned meeting ensued, with everyone invited to hear the reasons and state our case. So strong was our voice that the decision was altered: BRAW lives on. The ease with which we came together, and the way in which SBT listened and responded, gave us a degree of democracy often denied to authors.

Second, there's the practical side of the networks. Could you find the names of every English children's author, right now? Well, you'll find all the Scottish ones on the BRAW website, linking to our own websites. Through Treasure Island, (which I started simply in order to organise a meal!) we have a private web forum for all Scottish children's authors and illustrators; through BRAW we can link authors, schools and readers; through SBT we have an organisation of political clout, and professional support.

There's dosh too. SBT part-funds hundreds of events by Scottish authors in schools, libraries and other groups. Recently, the Society of Authors in Scotland got the accepted minimum

speaking fee raised to £150 per event, now the benchmark for all events, whether SBT-funded or not. While clearly helping authors, this much-envied system has also supported our heroes, school librarians, by empowering their ability and enthusiasm in the task of promoting reading amongst young people.

Thirdly, there's the literary heritage. By choosing a Scottish garret for our star-vation, we join a rich tradition of storytelling, generations of wordsmiths of whom Scotland is proud. Maybe it's the dark winter nights, as we huddle by the fire eating porridge while the winds and the bogles rage outside. (Don't believe a word of it – we have electricity now ...) Maybe it *is* something in the whisky, that original central heating system. Who knows? All I know is that, though British, English and Welsh, I am entirely happy being also a Scottish children's author.

Nicola Morgan is the Chair of the Society of Authors in Scotland. Her next book, The Highwayman's Curse, is set in Scotland but can be enjoyed by readers anywhere.

My Heart's in the Highlands (and dotted about various other Scottish locales)

Sara Grady

(Children & Education Programme Director, Edinburgh International Book Festival)

As a child reader coming from abroad, I knew Scotland as a place of rapture – of wild islands and adventurous highlanders, of mysterious intrigue and violent passions. The rugged beauty and breathless daring of such tales stole my heart. One of my favourite novels at that impressionable age was the sadly out-of-print *Quest for a Maid* by Frances Mary Hendry, set against the medieval witch trials of Fife and the crowning of the Maid o' Norway (a toddler princess who never made it to these shores alive). I was captivated, heart and soul.

The mystery of the far-away places awoke something within me I think, for I never truly came home until I felt the hair rolling across Edinburgh and witnessed sunset over the Western Isles. In fact, I think I can safely blame young adult fiction almost entirely for my ex-pat status. For Scotland is a setting so ripe for discovery. In the best of fiction it becomes a character all its own. The perfect locale,

delicately rendered, is a reading worth savouring, and Scotland has such likenesses abounding.

Vibrant narrative flair breathes life and poignancy into the places and people of Scotland in young adult fiction, both classic and contemporary. The land is alive, the atmosphere is tangible, and a reader's experience of them will never be forgotten. We may be listening intently as Jean Brodie tours though Edinburgh's steep and varied landscape, or running along Robert Louis Stevenson's rocky coasts and creviced country in *Kidnapped*. The places are so integral to the narrative that these stories could have been born nowhere else, however far they may have travelled since.

Such scenes can flash across the mind and quicken the heart, even for those who have never cast an eye on Scotland. The clatter of Burke and Hare hauling stolen bodies across the wet cobbles of

Edinburgh's old town in Nicola Morgan's *Fleshmarket* is just as harrowing if you've never witnessed the misty closes by lamplight. Katie Morag meanders with readers as if they were friends through her idyllic fishing village, capturing the quaint gentleness of island life. Even the eccentric shop selling nothing but stacks and stacks of shoe-polish tins in John's Fardell's *Seven Professors of the Far North* is simultaneously breathtaking and endearing, even for those who do not know the real shop (sadly sans John's extraordinary subterranean train station). And the echoes of Glasgow's magnificent submerged university in Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* ring with the silenced thoughts and desolate hopes of many generations.

These places speak in their own voices and whisper through the readers' minds about daring truths and endless exploration – of hidden gems and living memories, of dreams and hopes and futures. Scotland is alive and crying out from within the pages of hundreds of stories, an inextricable element of the narrative and an unrivalled atmosphere for the reader. Scotland will steal your heart when the chorus of

outstanding voices writing today intricately renders it in all its multitude of facets. No matter what the landscape or style, the fierce dedication and outstanding talent of Scottish authors take readers on a journey of unparalleled joy and reveal an intimate connection with an unrivalled beauty.

The tradition of great literature for young people has thrived in Scotland for past generations, and I have every faith it will continue to do so for readers and writers yet to come. Indeed, the Scotland of stories is constantly changing and ceaselessly captivating – a landscape I hope all young people have the chance to discover and explore for themselves.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival is intended as a means to help them in this discovery. It runs for 3 weeks every August (11–27 August 2007; 9–25 August 2008) in a tented village within the beautiful Georgian Charlotte Square Gardens in the heart of Edinburgh, playing host to over 200 authors for children and young adults in an unrivalled celebration of words, ideas and stories (www.edbookfest.co.uk).

Children's Literature: Alive and Well and Living in Scotland

Maureen A. Farrell

In *Children's Literature and National Identity* (Meek, 2001), British children's literature is well represented. There are chapters on English, Welsh and Irish children's literature. There is however no mention of Scottish children's literature. *The International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (2004) has interesting sections on children's literature from many countries round the world. Scotland is represented: Scotland, we are told, has contributed significantly to the canon of children's literature and there follows an extremely short section. In it, as you might expect, there is mention of Stevenson, Barrie and MacDonald. Mollie Hunter, Joan Lingard and Mairi Hedderwick get a mention but there is no indication, in any true sense, about the wealth of astonishingly good children's literature that's around written by Scottish-born authors, authors who have made their homes in Scotland or works that use Scottish settings or have fundamentally Scottish themes: Theresa Breslin, Catherine Forde, Tom Pow, Catherine MacPhail, Matthew Fitt, Julie Bertagna, Debi Gliori, Colin Foreman, Scoular Anderson, Keith Gray, Nicola Morgan, James Jauncey, Naomi Mitchison, Eric Linklater, Catherine Sinclair, Jackie Kay ... the list just goes on and on. And the quality is there too, these authors include Carnegie medal winners and Scottish Arts Council prizewinners.

The books cover all genres from fantasy to thrillers, with the historical novel particularly strongly represented and of superior quality – much as is the case with 'adult' Scottish literature – for example Nicola Morgan's *Fleshmarket* (2003) or Mollie Hunter's *The Stronghold* (1974). Theresa Breslin's *Remembrance* (2002) addresses the Scottish experience of World War 1. Her more recent novel *Divided City* (2005) tackles the thorny issues of sectarianism, particularly as related to football in Glasgow, but also it folds in an additional type of 'otherness' in its theme of inclusion of asylum seekers in the Scottish community.

The fantasy element is still a strong feature in Scottish children's writing, from Gillian Arbuthnot's *Chaos Clock* series to Vivian French's *The Robe of Skulls* (2007). Science fiction – dystopic and not – is also an area of strength: Julie Bertagna's new novel *Zenith* (2007), a follow up to her 2003 novel *Exodus*, is a case in point.

Useful resources to further knowledge of Scottish children's fiction can be found on the website BRAW (the Scots word meaning fine or splendid), the Network for the Scottish children's book at www.braw.org.uk. A really helpful publication from the Association for Scottish Literary Studies *Treasure Islands* (2003) provides a brief critical examination of some Scottish children's fiction. As well as handy reviews of 160 books, it contains suggested age and reading levels and the most up-to-date bibliographic information. Online updates are also available at www.arts.gla.ac.uk/scotlit/asls/Treasure_Islands.html.

Itchy Coo www.itchy-coo.com produces books written in the Scots language especially aimed at children and young people. The imprint was set up in 2002 and is jointly run by writers James Robertson, Matthew Fitt and Edinburgh-based Black & White Publishing. In four years 21 different titles, from a board book for very wee bairns to a major anthology of 600 years of literature in Scots for upper secondary students have been produced. Among the titles are a CD of actors reading extracts from some of the books, and the first ever Scots language publication in Braille.

So, Scottish children's literature really is alive, well and thriving – don't let it just live in Scotland!

A Warning for the Future?

Jessica Yates

Julie Bertagna, an increasingly popular Scottish writer, has, in *Exodus* (2002) and *Zenith* (2007), produced the first two volumes of a proposed trilogy which depicts the inevitability and permanence of the rising sea as a result of global warming. The scale and complexity of her work shows her to be one of the heirs of John Wyndham in the science-fiction writing tradition.

The prologue to *Exodus* tells us that the human race has destroyed its wonderful planet: 'Earth raged with a century of storm', and the novel opens in the year 2099 where Bertagna has set her opening chapters on an island cluster, all that remains of north Scotland. Mara, our heroine, guards a piece of old technology, a solar-powered minicomputer or cyberwizz, by which she travels in cyberspace and hears of a New World of sky cities safe from the sea. In summer 2100 the islands are drowned and the islanders set out for a new home. When they arrive at New Mungo, the sky city built above the drowned city of Glasgow, they find a two-tier system: refugees are kept outside the city in a floating mass of boats, to survive or die on fish and rainwater, or to be enslaved

by the city dwellers. Mara first of all enters the ruined city of Glasgow to find other outcasts living around the old cathedral, from whom she hears more of the disaster which has destroyed our world: 'Suddenly it was all too late ... A massive sea surge hit Europe. The whole continent was wiped out' (pp. 201–202). Mara enters the technology-rich sky city in disguise where she meets again a young man whose avatar, a cyberfox, she previously met in cyberspace. Together they devise a plot to free the slaves and sail off to find a new land.

Zenith begins as Mara takes her refugees off in a ship to find Greenland, about which she has read in Glasgow's deserted library. Fox has remained in New Mungo to work for a revolution, and learns how to survive from the one person who stayed behind when the young left with Mara. We meet a whole new culture of survivors, the 'gypseas' who live in a vast city of boats lashed together and connected by bridgeways, living off the food from the sea. We also meet Tuck, a teenage boy named after a picture of a smiling man on a salvaged advertising board – the old folk have associated this with the name of Kentucky.

By accident Mara's ship smashes into the floating city, and the gypseas pursue it for revenge. The ship is wrecked on Greenland's shore, Mara's people are captured by the natives – Inuit folk perhaps – and escape when the gypseas attack. Tuck decides to stay on land and joins Mara's people, who live a bare subsistence life in the caves hidden from the natives, succoured by a hot pool. There are two significant episodes when Mara uses her cyberwizz to explore, with Fox's guidance, how the world came to be flooded, using satellite images in cyberspace: 'But they knew. They could've done something, but they didn't. They knew. They didn't think about the future, did they? They never thought about us' (pp. 206–207).

The end of this book sets the story up for the third part of the trilogy: Tuck has become separated from Mara's people during a journey through tunnels to find open land at the other side of the cave complex. He has returned to the shore people where his vision has driven him

to become one of their leaders. At the same time, Mara's child by Fox is growing up in their new inland settlement, while Fox hopes that the time for revolution has finally come.

It is perhaps dispiriting that this book, like so many others of its type, presents a catalogue of doom and gloom, but one of the roles of science-fiction writers is to warn us about the future so that we may take precautions against it. Writers for the young have taken up the challenge posed by Wyndham and Ballard, and have carried out their duty; it is now up to the citizens of the world to heed the warnings not only from creative artists, but also from the scientists, journalists and politicians.

This article is part of Jessica Yates' chapter, 'The near future in science fiction for children and young adults', in Time Everlasting: Representations of Past, Present and Future in Children's Literature, edited by Pat Pinsent, to be published later in 2007 by Pied Piper Publishing.

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A Celebration of Scottish Children's Literature

Shirley Neilson and Vanessa Robertson

The Old Children's Bookshelf and Fidra Books recently held a weekend conference, 'A Celebration of Scottish Children's Literature', at the University of Edinburgh's Pollock Halls, with special guest Elinor Lyon. Our aims were: to extend awareness of Scottish children's books beyond Stevenson; to look at Scottish locations, Scottish history; and to examine what else defined 'Scottishness' in children's books. We made it quite clear from the beginning that we rejected the 'bonnie tartan heather' school. We still had many excellent books to choose from.

Being a specialist children's second-hand bookshop, we like to affect that we are totally unaware of anything published after about 1970, so it will be no surprise that our target audience was definitely collectors: yesterday's children, not today's. Fidra Books, an independent Edinburgh publisher, has as one of its aims keeping these wonderful books alive – books written in the days when authors and publishers were not afraid of books about intelligent middle-class children, and didn't fret over political correctness.

After rather a flippant introduction, covering the 'Historical Background' from Walter Scott (who began it all with *Waverley* ... 'at a stroke he created Scottish historical fiction, the Scottish tourist trade and half the tartans in the shops'), through RLS and *Kidnapped*, we sprinted through the Big Names that we felt at least deserved a mention – Mary, Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie ('a weak womaniser with a drink problem, presenting something of a problem to children's authors'), the Covenanters and the Clearances (always Right, always Wronged).

And then the proper talks began.

In her 'Scottish Travelogue', Shirley Neilson examined some lesser-known books according to region. In the Borders was M.E. Atkinson's *The Compass Points North* with the Locketts and Fenella and Podge being feuding Picts and Scots and Ancient Britons on the Border itself at Kirk Yetholm near Kelso. *Robinsheugh* by Eileen Dunlop, a time-slip story between the 1970s and 1770s, was, with a bit of detective work, found to be based on Traquair House on the Tweed near Innerleithen. It has a wealth of 'Scottishness', most interestingly in the minutiae of immaculately researched Scottish domestic history. Border Reivers were covered in Molly Holden's *Reivers' Weather*.

We were delighted to have some original material from Allan Campbell McLean, lent by his son, Gus McLean, including a scrap book of reviews and the original copy of *The Celtic Magazine* of March 1885 with the lead article 'Terrorism on Skye' on which he based his *Ribbon of Fire*. The 'terrorism' refers not to the Skye crofters but to the notorious Sheriff Ivory's ferocious attempts to quell their protests.

Another main area covered was Fife, looking at St. Andrews (Kathleen Fidler's *The Mysterious Mr Simister* and Iona McGregor's *The Popinjay*, both involving, through different time perspectives, the assassination of Cardinal Beaton), and Culross, where Kathleen Fidler's *Escape in Darkness* shows Culross Palace, former home of the Bruce family, in a much more interesting light than do the National Trust guides.

Joy Wotton, a well-known authority on children's books, gave a talk on Olivia Fitz Roy, one of Fidra's authors. This was literally a different class of children's fiction, with the Stewarts being 'one of the poorest families in Scotland' despite Ninian being at Eton and Fiona being the most attractive deb of the season.

'Edinburgh in Children's Books' was condensed with only the greatest difficulty into a 40 minute talk. Kirstie Taylor, a former children's librarian who now works in the Old Children's Bookshelf, pointed out that Edinburgh has everything – a castle, a palace, the sea, an extinct volcano, narrow cobbled wynds, history, romance It also has the Royal Mile (home of the Old Children's Bookshelf) – Kirstie prepared a Royal Mile Trail of children's books from Castle to Holyrood.

Owen Dudley Edwards, a well-known broadcaster, writer, lecturer, wit and raconteur, was our after-dinner speaker, and nobly concentrated on 'Scottishness', rather than promoting his forthcoming book, *British Children's Fiction of the Second World War*, to be published by the Edinburgh University Press at the end of July 2007.

Vanessa Robertson talked about setting up and running her publishing company, about tracking down her authors, and told us the origins of 'Fidra' (not 'Phaedra' as one bookseller thought). It's encouraging that she is now selling these mid-twentieth-century titles to school libraries.

But the highlight of the weekend for most of us was the chance to listen to Elinor Lyon 'In Conversation with Hilary Clare'. This was a real treat for all of us who have enjoyed Elinor Lyon's Ian, Sovra and Cathie books since our own childhoods. The conference also saw the launch of Fidra's reprint of her very scarce and desirable *Run Away Home*, with queues for signed copies.

We hope we achieved our aim of extending awareness of Scottish children's authors. We certainly had a stimulating weekend.

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'And in First Place, Tunnock's Teacakes' – The South Lanarkshire Book Award 2007

Rachel Anderson

Authors occasionally feel they can't spare time to attend regional prize-givings in out-of-the-way places. Understandable enough. We have to make a living. But it's always a let-down for a youthful audience when the real-live author fails to materialise to accept their prize and a publisher's rep does it instead. In Scotland, an enterprising library service has developed its own method for ensuring that not one, but five potential prizewinners will definitely turn up to enhance the special event.

The South Lanarkshire Award is for the best teenage book in paperback. The Education Resource team select a short-list of five and the nominees are notified. However, to have a chance of becoming winner, each must commit to being in South Lanarkshire on the required days and to participating in the programme. Cunning. Meanwhile, 300 pupils from 10 schools in the region are being drawn into the selection process. They too must make their commitment. In the four months between December and early March, each pupil must read all five novels. This, according to one of the teachers, can seem a challenge for students who are not (yet?) committed readers.

However, it's only then that they earn the right to cast their vote in the secret ballot, and to join in with the big day. This involvement is a far remove from Carnegie shadowing when school readers may indeed choose their own favourite novel but the ultimate choice is actually made by a separate panel of adults.

And so, it came about that for the most recent award, 2007, I was among the fortunate five and travelled to South Lanarkshire. None of the quintet had met before. We were from Glasgow, East Anglia, Cumbria and Ireland via Brockley. The origins of the fifth nominee were less clear, though that author owned to spending a year living in a hut without telephone or electricity on a Greek island. We were booked into a placid hotel near the historic site of the savage Battle of Bothwell Brig. Throughout the 'librarians-meet-the-authors' dinner, one of the five was extremely frail and pale owing to a stormy flight with bumpy descent over the Campsies. Another complained mildly about the absence of free fancy toiletries in the hotel bathroom and that the red wine wasn't flowing freely enough. This was quickly remedied.

However, overindulgence wasn't to our advantage since we had by then been issued with our timetables. My start next morning was 8.45 a.m. My 'minder' for the day, one of the senior librarians, transported me some 20 miles south to my first school visit. As we trundled through the rolling countryside, he pointed out the routes and deviations he used to follow as a junior driving the mobile library round the villages.

One hour and 20 minutes later, it was 20 miles back north to the next school. Often, authors haven't a clue who's reading our stories so these encounters can be as enlightening for us as we try to make them for the readers. When I asked one of them her reaction to becoming involved with the South Lanarkshire awards, she said it was good because, 'We get a day off school.' I thought she meant that there had been a free day at some point earlier. In fact, she meant that sitting in the library talking about books and life and politics with me didn't count as a lesson, nor, moreover, did the prospect of being bussed up to the town of Hamilton later in the day.

The students from all 10 schools had been primed to consider that their contribution was important. Moreover, my groups had been encouraged to regard me as 'their' author so that, even if they hadn't voted for my book, they should applaud when we met again in the afternoon.

Hamilton Town House is a magnificent municipal building of pink sandstone and sparkly granite. Here, we nominees were put through our half-hour photocall, then some videoed interviews, but no seriously arduous questions about the meaning of our fiction, more on the lines of: How do you feel about taking part in this award? Do you feel that awards like this encourage young people to read and write? How do you feel about the result being by votes of the pupils? To all of which my responses were, self-evidently, positive. Next, a speed lunch in an elegant panelled room meeting with local dignitaries. Then onstage under the glare of the spotlights in the Assembly Theatre before our 300 readers who did indeed do us proud with their cheers and catcalls each time 'their' author's name was mentioned.

The event is partly sponsored by national and local businesses, including Tunnock's, a long-established family firm which produces sweet delectables for teas and high teas, their best innovation being the Tunnock's teacake which is far removed

from OED's 'flat toasted bun', being a dome of sugary marshmallow, mounted on a crisp biscuit base, the whole thing dipped in milk chocolate and wrapped in Tunnock's red and silver striped foil and then in Tunnock's bright yellow carton, which, if you're an aficionado, you'd recognise anywhere in the world. Countries of the Middle East are, according to my well-informed minder, the largest consumers.

Before the winner was announced, each author gave a presentation of themselves and their work. Then there was a Q&A session from the floor. We were expecting the usual: Where do you get your ideas? and How much do you get for a book? In fact, the first question, from a perky little lad in the front row took us somewhat by surprise. 'My question, for the whole panel please. If you were a biscuit, what kind of biscuit would you be?' It went to me first. If I'd had my wits about me, I'd have leapt for the mike and said 'a Tunnock's teacake.' As it was, I claimed, just as sycophantically 'a Scottish shortbread' and still won a round of applause.

Ultimately, however much the various factions roared and stamped their feet for the contenders from Glasgow, Cumbria, East Anglia and Brockley, it was the handsome author who'd lived in the hut on the Greek island who got the loudest cheers and who, when the sealed envelope was opened by the Director of Education Resources, was revealed to have won the most votes. For his novel, *Do the Creepy Thing*, Graham Joyce was presented with the crystal rose bowl. But then, presumably so there'd be no resentment, all five of us were presented with an honorarium and a glossy picture book about Scotland's coastline.

A day later, back home in my reclusive writing shed, I discovered I had another unintended souvenir, a fluorescent visitor's badge which I'd inadvertently pocketed. 'You are a welcome VISITOR to Lesmahagow High School' it proclaims. Underneath, is their motto, *virtute*, surely as useful a maxim for an author as for a student.

South Lanarkshire Book Award 2007 shortlist

Rachel Anderson, *Red Moon* (Hodder)
Catherine Forde, *Firestarter* (Egmont)
Sandra Glover, *Spiked* (Andersen)
Graham Joyce (winner), *Do the Creepy Thing* (Faber)
Brian Keane, *Jacob's Ladder* (Orchard)

A Selection of Recent Titles

Pam Robson

Historically Scottish publishers and writers have played a significant role in the development of children's literature in Britain. Testament to this legacy is the continuing high profile of the contemporary Scottish publishing world which continues to build upon its memorable and diverse heritage. Among the figures who stand out from earlier periods are John Catnach (1769–1813), a Scottish printer of chapbooks who later moved to London where his son reprinted existing books for children; Thomas Bowdler of Edinburgh (1754–1825) who gave us the word 'bowdlerise' as a result of his adaptations of Shakespeare's works, published as *The Family Shakespear*; and a Scottish publisher, D.C. Thomson of Dundee, who published the *Dandy* and *Beano* comics in 1937 and 1938, respectively. Scotland also has a rich legacy of Celtic folk tales and Joseph Jacobs included many of these in his folk tale collection, published in 1892. Jacobs drew on a collection of Gaelic tales from the Highlands collected by J.F. Campbell of Islay and published in 1860.

Scotland has given to the world of children's books some of the best-loved authors still to be found in today's long list of children's classics. The catalogue must begin with the great historical novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) who saw himself as writing for adults but in 1888 was voted third in a poll of boys' favourite authors. The best-known work of R.M. Ballantyne (1825–1894), who knew Scott personally, is *Coral Island* (1857), so significant in the 'desert island' genre. A quite different creative and original book for children is *Holiday House* (1839) by Catherine Sinclair (1800–1864), the daughter of a Scottish philanthropist. In 1871, *At the Back of the North Wind* by George MacDonald (1824–1905) was published, to be followed by his many other influential novels for adults and children. In 1883, Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) published *Treasure Island*, shortly to be followed by *Kidnapped*, another book reflecting the influence of Scott's historical fiction. Stevenson's writing in turn was to prove a major influence upon John Buchan (1875–1940), born in Perth and author of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915). In 1887 the first Sherlock Holmes story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), born in Edinburgh, was published. Helen Bannerman (1862–1946), also from Edinburgh, had her story *Little Black Sambo* published in 1899. The twentieth century saw the emergence of J.M. Barrie (1860–1937), born near Dundee, author of *Peter Pan* (1904), and Edinburgh-born Kenneth Grahame (1859–1932), whose classic *Wind in the Willows* was published in 1908.

Contemporary Scottish authors continue to shine; while the following list includes such talented writers as Mollie Hunter (Carnegie Medal 1974 for *The Stronghold*), Mairi Hedderwick, Joan Lingard, Theresa Breslin (Carnegie Medal 1994 for *Whispers in the Graveyard*) and Catherine MacPhail, it also includes titles which may not have been written by a Scottish author, but do have a Scottish setting. (To find more about Scottish writers go to www.braw.org.uk.)

Fantasy and folk tale

David Clement-Davies, *Fire Bringer*, Macmillan, 0333766407, 1999.

An anthropomorphic fantasy set in Scotland in times past – reference is made to Viking incursions. An outstanding first novel, reminiscent of *Watership Down* but with deer rather than rabbits as the main characters. In this third person narrative the deer characters communicate but otherwise are not humanised. Over 500 pages of gripping reading.

Ann Coburn, *Worm Songs*, Red Fox, 0099643111, 1996.

This is the first title in a fantasy series, *The Borderlands* (sequels are *Web Weaver* and *Dark Water*) for 9–12 year olds. Children from the present are involved with time-shifts into the Stuart period, and a witch being tortured appeals for help.

Susan Cooper, *The Boggart*, Puffin, 0140364889, 1997.

The setting for this fantasy moves between Scotland and Canada. When the Volnik family inherit a Scottish castle they also acquire a genuine trouble-making boggart.

This spirit travels back to Canada with the family. Disaster is only avoided when the boggart takes itself inside a floppy disk. This exciting novel brings together ancient beliefs and modern technology. The sequel, *The Boggart and the Monster*, has the boggart meeting up with the Loch Ness monster, which is also a boggart.

Kevin Crossley-Holland, illus. Emma Chichester-Clark, *The Magic Lands: Folk Tales of Britain and Ireland*, Orion Children's Books, 1842555146, 2006.

First published in 1987 as *British Folk Tales*, this collection includes familiar folk tales, ghost stories and fairy tales from each part of Britain. This is a weighty tome, but very readable. There are opening illustrations in black and white for each story and notes at the back.

Berlie Doherty, *Daughter of the Sea*, Puffin, 0140379517, 1996.

A fantasy novel about selkies, or seal people, based on ancient tales from Iceland, Ireland and Scotland. Munroe and Jannet have always wished for a child and when he finds a baby in the sea he brings her home. Named Gioga, the child grows up with a fascination for the sea. One day a mysterious stranger claims her for his own, but Jannet will do anything to keep her daughter. Eventually Gioga is handed her seal skin, which has been hidden away by old Eilean, and returns to her seal home.

Rosalind Kerven, *The Sea is Singing*, Puffin, 014032352X, 1986.

This eerie, gripping story is set in the Shetlands. Teresa is 12 years old, her father is an oil rig worker. She hears the singing of the whales, though no one else can hear them. The Guardians enrol her to prevent further pollution caused by an oil slick. This book won the TES Book of the Year award and has been dramatised for radio.

Garry Kilworth, *The Phantom Piper*, Mammoth, 0749723874, 1994.

A time-warp fantasy for older readers, using Scots dialogue, linking the twentieth-century population of Canlish Glen with a sixteenth-century massacre. A tense fantasy with strong characterisation and plot, but a somewhat abrupt ending.

Gwyneth Rees, *Fairy Dust*, Macmillan, 0330415549, 2003.

A story for younger readers about fairies, set in the Isle of Skye. Rosie's parents have separated and she and her mother arrive on the island to live in their new rented home. Rosie becomes involved in saving the life of Snowball, a fairy who is dying because the memory of the human child with whom she was associated is fading.

Lisa Tuttle, *The Panther in Argyll*, Mammoth, 0749744790, 1996.

A novel for older readers, set in Scotland. Danni, whose parents are divorcing, is staying with her godmother when her mother goes to New York. Rumours abound of a black panther in the area, and Danni becomes involved in a slightly incredible story of animal metamorphosis.

Historical fiction

Theresa Breslin, *Kezzie*, Egmont, 140520110X, 1993.

This book is set in 1930s Glasgow. After Kezzie's father is killed in a mining accident the family is evicted; its members suffer poverty and degradation, and are separated by an accident, the younger sister Lucy being sent to Canada by an adoption agency. Kezzie searches for her sister and there is a happy ending, leaving enough unanswered questions for a sequel, *A Homecoming for Kezzie*.

Nicola Morgan, *Fleshmarket*, Hodder, 0340855576, 2003.

An historical novel for older readers, set in Edinburgh in 1828. Robbie recalls the dreadful death of his mother, after an operation for cancer without anaesthetic, at the hands of Dr Knox. He meets Burke and Hare and gives evidence that convicts them. He also meets James Simpson, pioneer of chloroform, and eventually becomes a surgeon himself. This is a vivid portrayal of the appalling slum conditions of the time.

Mary Rhind, *The Dark Shadow*, Canongate Press, 0862412536, 1989.

A novel for older readers, first published in 1988. The setting is the Firth of Forth in Tudor times. Mary Queen of Scots' French husband has just died; rumour has it that she will return to Scotland to rule. The atmosphere is one of fear; religious fervour

against Catholics is high. Against this backcloth Dave leads his blind sister, Lizzie, on a pilgrimage, in the hope that a miracle will restore her sight. They are pursued by Walter, their angry anti-Catholic stepfather. But it is Walter who saves them; he mellows and Lizzie is cured.

Rosemary Sutcliff, *The Shining Company*, Red Fox, 0099855801, 1990.

Set in Scotland and the north in the year AD 600, and based on the earliest north British poem *Gododdin* which tells of the 300 who rode against the Saxons.

Rosemary Sutcliff, *Sword Song*, Red Fox, 0099253224, 1998.

This, Sutcliff's final book, is set in north-west England, Ireland, Scotland and north Wales at a time prior to 1066 when Vikings were settling in these areas. Christianity is taking over from the Norse gods. Bjarni, who has killed a Christian monk, is exiled from his home in the north-west and lives as a mercenary.

General fiction

Rachel Anderson, *Princess Jazz and the Angels*, Mammoth, 0749723912, 1994.

A powerful novel in which the action shifts between Glasgow and the Punjab. The eponymous Jazz, child of an irresponsible Irish mother and a deceased Sikh father, visits her father's family in the Punjab. Her unsatisfactory attitude eventually changes, especially when her Indian grandmother gives her an old photograph of her father. A superbly colourful story packed with fascinating detail.

Theresa Breslin, *Saskia's Journey*, Doubleday, 0385604823, 2004.

This powerful story is set in north-west Scotland. The eponymous Saskia is the only child of demanding, argumentative parents. Her father expects her to enter his business, but during her gap year she visits her great-aunt Alessandra, where she discovers family secrets, learning that her grandfather was guilty of sexual abuse.

Lavinia Derwent, *The Tale of Greyfriars Bobby*, Puffin, 0140311815, 1985.

This is a child's version of the original, true story, first published in 1912, by Eleanor Stackhouse Atkinson, an American writer who used Scots language in it. Set in Edinburgh, where the dog's statue remains today, it is about a Skye terrier who guards his master's grave for many years after his death.

Eileen Dunlop, *Finn's Island*, Puffin, 01403690661, 1992.

Motherless Finn lives on a run-down farm with his father, an aspiring poet, and his grandmother. Chance brings into their lives Douglas, who takes Finn to the home of Finn's dead grandfather on the desolate island of Hirsay, where he gains a better understanding of the past. Environmental issues feature.

Mollie Hunter, *The Dragonfly Years*, Collins, 000672261X, 1983.

This moving story is set in Edinburgh at the outbreak of the Second World War. Bridie lives with her strictly religious grandparents and wants to be a writer. She attends evening classes, where she meets Peter. A superb picture of social attitudes of the time emerges. References are made to fascism and Hitler's treatment of the Jews. Strong characterisation makes this a good read.

Richard Kidd, *Deadly Famous*, Yearling, 0440864135, 2001.

A real adventure story which begins in England and moves to a remote island in Scotland for the exciting climax. The story, relating to the reported death of a famous artist, is told retrospectively. Action packed but not scary.

Joan Lingard, *Hands off Our School!*, illus. Mairi Hedderwick, Puffin, 0140360964, 1992.

This school story is set in the Highlands and is told by Katy, one of the 14 pupils at a tiny village school which is fighting closure. This is a lively, amusing tale of a small community determined to win against all odds.

Joan Lingard, *Me and My Shadow*, Heinemann Education, 0435130706, 2001.

The setting is Scotland where 15-year-old Emily is being shadowed by her double, who turns out to be her half-sister. Characterisation is strong, exposing social differences.

Catherine MacPhail, *Fighting Back*, Bloomsbury, 0747563365, 1998.

This hard-hitting story is set in Scotland in a tower block on a council estate. The first person narrator is Kerry who lives with her recently divorced mother. The two move into their new council flat only to fall foul of the local bully, Mrs Lafferty, who proceeds to terrorise them after Kerry is witness to her daughter's attempts at shoplifting. Eventually the other tenants set aside their fear of the woman and support Kerry and her mother and peace is finally restored.

Catherine MacPhail, *Dark Waters*, Bloomsbury, 0747555494, 2003.

A Scottish setting for this moralistic ghost story. Col McCann, who belongs to a criminal family, rescues a younger boy from a frozen loch, and sees a submerged body there. There are both moral issues and humour in this excellent tale.

Sue Mayfield, *Voices*, Hodder, 0340860634, 2003.

A teenage romance, based on a school play and a cyberspace relationship, begun as a result of Isobel receiving a letter from a remote Scottish island.

Alison Prince, *The Sherwood Hero*, Macmillan, 0330400282, 1995.

Winner of the Guardian Children's Fiction Award in 1996. The setting is Glasgow. Just like Robin Hood, Kelly has stolen from the rich to give to the poor and her father loses his job because of it. She confronts her action with the help of her friend Angie, a girl of Indian origin. A story which raises moral issues.

Alison Prince, *Dear Del*, Hodder, 0340851570, 1999.

Fran's family are new to their Scottish island home and she is finding it hard to make friends. Her brother Barney is autistic. Del, a deprived teenager from Glasgow, spends a holiday with them, and a real friendship develops between the two girls.

Picture books

Ruth Brown, *Greyfriars Bobby*, Anderson Press, 0862645719, 1995.

Ruth Brown's superbly realistic artwork for this true story evokes the past as the story unfolds and two children learn the story of the Skye terrier. Many issues arise: death in old age and change over time.

Mairi Hedderwick, *Katie Morag's Island Stories*, 0099438569, 2003,
and *The Big Katie Morag Story Book*, 0099720310, 2000, both Red Fox.

Compilations of the Katie Morag stories, plus poems, recipe, songs and a map of Struay, the actual home of the author/illustrator. Katie is a strong-willed child who is constantly being rescued from various escapades by Granny Island, who drives a tractor. Superbly detailed watercolour artwork.

Launches at the Pakistan High Commission and the Ghanaian High Commission

It is becoming quite a habit to wander through the embassies of Belgravia to attend the launch of books which their authors hope will serve as bridges between cultures. On 23 May 2007, Prodecepta Das's *P is for Pakistan*, a picture book published by Frances Lincoln, was the focus of an interesting evening. Das talked about the photographs which form the basis for a book that the publishers hope will inform children, whether of Pakistani origin or not, about the customs and settings of that country. The talks and refreshments were followed by a showing of a film about Mohammed Ali Jinnar, the 'father' of modern Pakistan.

On 6 July, Sophie Acheampong's *Growing Yams in London* (Piccadilly) was the occasion for celebrating the dual heritage of children born in this country whose parents or grandparents are from Ghana. The book tells of the tension experienced by Makeeda, a devotee of lip gloss and mascara, whose friends are from a variety of backgrounds, in trying to balance the family adherence to Ghanaian customs with her own interests in boyfriends and parties. The narration is vividly expressed in language characteristic of her age group.

The new Children's Laureate

Announcement

All those who are aware of his extensive and long involvement with promoting poetry for children will have rejoiced at the choice of Michael Rosen as Children's Laureate in succession to Jacqueline Wilson. His predecessor was among the 'great and good' at the ceremony at BAFTA in Piccadilly on 11 June 2007, and she entertained the audience by an account of the variety of events in which she had participated during her two years of tenure. Representatives of the Booktrust, Waterstone's, and the government Department of Culture, Media and Sport, also spoke, as well as Shami Chakrabati, the chair of the laureate panel. In his own talk, Michael Rosen spoke of his planned campaign as laureate to rescue poetry from the negative effects of the National Curriculum, and also to restore the status of picture books.

'Marxism and Children's Literature' conference

Michael Rosen's multifaceted activity, even before he undertook his current position, had become very apparent to me two days earlier, on 9 June, when I attended a conference organised by him at London University, entitled 'Marxism and Children's Literature'. He gave no hint of his forthcoming honour (much though some of those present suspected it!), but put forward the same vision about poetry and picture books. Other speakers at this lively but rather sparsely attended day included authors Jonathan Neale and Alan Gibbons, and academics Jon Berry, Jeannie Robinson and Victoria de Rijke. There are plans for another conference on this theme at the same place in late June 2008 – look out for details!

CLPE Poetry Award 2007

And then, two days after the laureate ceremony, on 13 June, Michael Rosen was around again – this time at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) for the Poetry Award 2007, which was presented, by Ian McMillan, to *The Thing that Mattered Most*, a collection of Scottish poetry for children (see review elsewhere in this issue of *IBBYLink*). The other judges were Margaret Meek Spencer and Fiona Waters, while the rest of the shortlist consisted of Chrissie Gittins' *I Don't Want an Avocado for an Uncle*, Tony Mitton's *My Hat and All That*, Gaby Morgan's *Fairy Poems*, Jackie Morris's *The Barefoot Book of Classic Poems* and John Siddique's *Don't Wear it on your Head, Don't Stick it down your Pants*.

IBBY annual general meeting

This was held on the evening of the same day as the laureate ceremony, 11 June 2007, at Penguin in The Strand, London. Business discussed included past and future IBBY conferences, and the British section's role in running the IBBY congress in August 2012 on the theme of 'Translations and Migrations'. Another item was our nomination of the Akili Trust, a small UK-based charity that works with communities in East Africa to equip and run libraries, for the IBBY–Asahi Reading Promotion Award. We were also glad to welcome two new members to the committee, Kathleen Milne and Judith Philo.

Before the short business meeting, Beverley Naidoo talked about her most recent book, *Burn my Heart* (Puffin, 2007), the story of two young boys, Mugo and Matthew, in Kenya in the Mau Mau period. Their friendship is put to the test by the differing situations of their families in the emergency which caused so much suffering, especially to the Kikuyu people. Beverley mentioned some of the various sources of her inspiration for this powerful novel, which despite its realistic and therefore somewhat depressing ending is not entirely bleak.

Roehampton University events

On 27 June 2007, students researching for a PhD in Children's Literature had the opportunity to present material from their work to an audience of fellow students. The variety of researches is indicated by topics such as nineteenth-century girls' fiction, interwar equine fiction, translated East German texts, video games, teenaged clones, and male power in contemporary young adult fiction.

A larger-scale event was the biennial Children's Literature International Summer School (CLISS), from 11–5 July. Speakers included Kerry Mallan, Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, Maria Nikolajeva and Rod McGillis, together with several writers for children, notably Janni Howker, Farrukh Dhondy, Eleanor Updale and Alan Gibbons, several of whom showed that personality is a more effective way of making presentations exciting than Powerpoint! A particularly welcome participant was Junko Yokuta, who stepped in at the last minute to replace a speaker who was ill. Of Japanese origin, she is a professor at an American university, a past president of the US national section of IBBY, currently on the Hans Andersen awards jury, a chair of countless committees, and one of the most rapid speakers I have encountered!

Pat Pinsent

Carnegie Medal and Kate Greenaway Medal

The winners of the 2007 medals were presented at a ceremony at the British Library, London, on 21 June 2007. The Carnegie Medal is awarded for an outstanding book for children and young people. The Kate Greenaway Medal is awarded for an outstanding book in terms of illustration for children and young people.

The 2007 CILIP Carnegie Medal has been won by Meg Rosoff for *Just in Case*, the follow-up to her award-winning debut novel *How I Live Now*. The medal is 70 years old this year. The shortlist was dominated by gritty teenage novels including *Road of the Dead* by Kevin Brooks, *Road of Bones* by Anne Fine, *My Swordhand is Singing* by Marcus Sedgwick, and two books by first-time novelists: *A Swift Pure Cry* by Siobhan Dowd and Ally Kennan's *Beast*.

Rosoff said of her win, 'I'm shocked and astonished and utterly delighted! *Just in Case* was such a problem-child of a book, and Justin turned out so scratchy and difficult. It's a divisive story; people either love it or hate it For a panel of librarians to agree that it deserves this historic medal is just amazing.' Ian Dodds, the chair of the judging panel and the CILIP Youth Libraries Group, commented, 'The quality of the writing in *Just in Case* is outstanding. An imaginative story of exceptional depth, it also has the power to help teenagers make sense of their lives.'

The winner of the 50th CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal is Mini Grey for *The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon*. This is the third time in four years that Grey has been shortlisted for the award. She was up against competition from *The Elephantom* by Ross Collins, *Orange Pear Apple Bear* by last year's winner Emily Gravett, *Scoop! An Exclusive* by Monty Molenski by John Kelly and Cathy Tincknell, *Augustus and His Smile* by newcomer Catherine Rayner, and *The Emperor of Absurdia* by previous winner Chris Riddell. Ian Dodds said, '*The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon* was our unanimous choice for the medal. It's a book with a huge heart ... With her cinematic references, visual jokes and eye for artistic detail, Mini Grey brilliantly conjures the America of the 1930s. Sweet, poignant and also very funny, this book is a triumph from beginning to end.' On winning the award, Mini Grey commented, 'The Kate Greenaway is the most special prize, and the only award for illustration that isn't divided into age categories. I particularly like that because I don't think books need to be made to fit into categories.'

Madelyn Travis

Reviews

Children's Books

Ask Me No Questions

Ann Schlee, London, Jane Nissen Books, pb 978-1-903252-26-0, £6.99, 2007, 225pp.

To begin with the facts; in 1847 a certain Mr Drouet wrote a letter to a number of workhouses announcing that he was opening a school for destitute children and offering places. His offer was quickly taken up by the overcrowded workhouses. Conditions in the Drouet school were appalling. Cholera struck in 1849 and 180 children died. Drouet himself was tried for manslaughter but acquitted. No less an adversary than Charles Dickens took up the case and led a public outcry against Drouet.

Such is the historical background of Schlee's novel. The story is told from the viewpoint of Laura and Barty, the middle-class children of a pastor. When the cholera strikes central London they are evacuated to Tooting, to a house next door to Drouet's school. The central conflict of the book arises between the inexperienced Laura who sees suffering children and aches to help them, and adults who see the class gap as an unbridgeable gulf. These 'workhouse brats' might as well be members of a different species. As if ironically to justify the adult view, Laura's willingness to help the victims of the epidemic places her in danger of joining them.

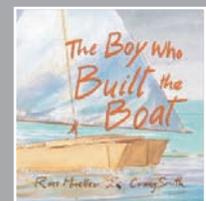
The child's-eye view from which the novel unfolds works well. The reader gets a vivid impression of Laura's struggle. She wants to preserve a sense of humanity, but already knows how powerfully an indefensible class system is being enforced. The tone verges occasionally on sentimentality, but in general the reader is carried along on a wave of indignation. Mr Dickens would approve.

Becky Butler

The Boy Who Built the Boat

Ross Mueller, illus. Craig Smith, Crows Nest, NSW, Allen & Unwin, hb 97817413935, £9.99, 2006, 32pp.

Drawn, as the illustrator confides, with 'a nibbled pen, and coloured using gouache paint and ink', this is a book to charm children and adults alike. Mueller's deceptively simple text alternates the spreads (which tell the story of a small boy whose father is a boat-builder, building a toy boat and then sailing it) with others in a larger typeface which create a list of the tools he collects to help him in his task, rearranging words



in a child-like way. Each page which tells the story, starts with the same words 'Henry went out to build a boat that day and he took along ...', making it an ideal story to read with pre-readers, who can join in with the repetitive words. They can have just as much fun adding 'or a hammer' at the end of the growing list of tools, and with the words which describe how it sails on its maiden voyage.

Smith's illustrations capture the gentle humour perfectly, and provide an evocative and unusual setting, detailing Henry's house and garden, the Australian coastal scenery with its distinctive flora and fauna – another excellent learning opportunity for small readers (and their carers!) to enjoy.

Bella's Brazilian Football

Adam Guillain, illus. Elke Steiner, Chicago, Milet, pb 9781840594881, £5.99, 2007, 32pp.

This is the fourth of Bella Balistica's adventures; Guillain once more addresses an issue of concern within the everyday world of his young audience, while also introducing them to an unusual time or place probably beyond their experience. Bella was born in Guatemala and now lives with her adoptive mother in London. In a previous book she discovered a magical pendant which had once belonged to her Guatemalan birth mother, and was instantly connected with her animal twin – the Quetzal bird – who helps her in her adventures.

This time Bella blames her lack of football skill on her boots, but with the help of the Quetzal, who takes her to play football with street kids in Rio de Janeiro, she realises it is attitude and teamwork, not new or expensive equipment, which produce results. Guillain is careful to show that Bella has a happy new home in England, but emphasises that despite the support she gets from her adoptive mother, there are issues can be resolved by no one but Bella herself. Steiner's illustrations reflect the heroine's South American origins, perhaps appearing unusually stylised in line and colour to young readers, but having value as an additional learning point.

[Rebecca Passick from Milet Press adds: An interesting aspect of *Bella's Brazilian Football* is that, in addition to being a story about international friendship, this book is also an international collaboration, as illustrator Elke Steiner is from Berlin, Germany. We are very excited about bringing Elke's dynamic, graphic illustrations to the UK.]

Bridget Carrington

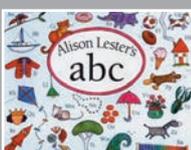
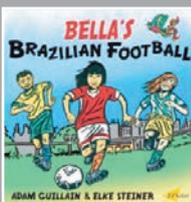
Alison Lester's ABC: Starring Alice and Aldo

Alison Lester, Crows Nest, NSW, Australia, Allen & Unwin, pb. 1 74114 894 4, £5.99, 2006, 32pp.

The front cover of this book is filled with objects, each letter of the alphabet being in both capitals and lower case. I hesitate to say 'familiar' objects as even porpoises turn up regularly in picture books for the young. The child exploring this book will enjoy identifying the objects on the cover even before opening the book.

The title page shows Alice surrounded by alphabet bricks, with Aldo, her stuffed kangaroo, sitting on brick 'K'. They are inseparable, the next page showing them both waking up in Alice's bed.

There is a story – the story of Alice and Aldo's day – running through the middle of each page in a rectangle. The large text words telling the story have as many words as possible, starting with the letter of the alphabet for that page. In small rectangles filling the area round the central story box are pictures and words – each word starting with the alphabet letter. Thus the first page's story text is 'Ah ha! Alice and Aldo are awake...' and the surround includes 'anchor', 'ant', 'anaconda' and 'abalone'. My ignorance about the snake and the edible mollusc referred to by these last two words



may not of course be shared by the Australian children who are the book's primary audience.

Another lovely illustration shows Alice and Aldo having 'breakfast in bed'. Alice is leaning against her pillow at the head of the bed, holding a cup; the tray is in the middle of the bed with the breakfast on it and Aldo is leaning against the foot of the bed. The illustration conveys their communication and their enjoyment of the moment.

It is hard to choose a favourite central picture as all have exhilarating themes. There is 'hand hay to Hugo,' – is it a tiger or a cat in the tree? And opposite, in the surround, is an eye-catching giraffe licking the right edge of the story box. Others are 'and leap in a leotard', 'o-oh, man overboard' (as the bathroom basin overflows), and finally 'and sleep all night long. zzzzzzzz' with the 'z's curving away from the sleeping pair. Lovely, lovely. How long will it take to read with a child? At least 26 days and then there is the cover ... What enjoyment!

Who Are You, Stripy Horse?

Jim Helmore and Karen Wall, London, Egmont, pb. 1 4052 2729 X, £5.99, 2007; hb. 1 4052 2728, £10.99, 32pp.

The lovely front cover on this large-format book (23.3cm by 30cm) shows a knitted, stuffed toy with brightly coloured stripes sitting on a hat box on a trunk under a standard lamp. Birds are flying off the lamp. Next to him is a rolled-up carpet and an umbrella. I am not sure about the location of this scene so I look at the back cover. This tells me about the story but I have to look inside to see 'Weevil's Bric-A-Brac' shop front – with a 'Closed' noticed. The window has written on it 'ITEMS BOUGHT AND SOLD'.



The action takes place inside a junk shop during the night when the stripy horse wakes up: 'He shook an ear, then a leg, then his tail. They all seemed to work.' He is greeted by a humming bird from the lampshade, who introduces herself as Muriel and asks the stripy horse "who are you?" "Er ... I can't remember" said the stripy horse, looking sad. "Cheer up," chirped Muriel ... "we could try asking Ming the Wise. But

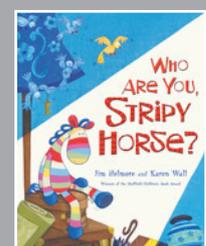
... he hates being disturbed." The story proceeds as the stripy horse and Muriel trek across the shop to find Ming, collecting Herman the draught excluder and Roly and Pitch the salt and pepper pot penguins in their procession (see the double-page illustration).

Some pages are quite busy with illustration and text, and at the bottom of each right-hand page the procession is lovingly shown in a way to make the reader sympathise but also worry, as time is limited by the approaching opening time the next morning.

There are difficulties for the procession when they reach Table Top Mountain where Mink, a Chinese-vase cat, lives, but each member contributes to getting the stripy horse to the top to meet him. Eventually the stripy horse says to Ming "What am I? Do I have a name?". I expected a wise answer and felt rather let down by what seemed a trite reply – but on turning to the next page, I realised the aptness of it and the satisfaction it gave. A happy ending is reached just in time: 'The shop was about to open. ... The stripy horse looked out of the window. It was going to be a beautiful day.'

The book is aimed at 3–5 year olds and will be much enjoyed by both reader and child. The story is compelling but children will also want to explore the intricacies of the illustrations, which are brilliantly coloured and give perfect characterisation.

Jennifer Harding



Best Mate

Michael Morpurgo, London, Harper Collins, 978-0-00-723057-0, 2007, 192pp.

This short, easily accessible, novel, will be a ‘must’ for young dog lovers, tracing as it does the adventures of a greyhound, abandoned and nearly drowned as a puppy, but surviving to bring improvement to the quality of life of its successive owners. Patrick, who rescues some puppies from the local canal and is allowed to retain one for himself, gives the first name, Best Mate, to the dog. At the same time, Patrick’s exploit means he overcomes his previous lack of confidence and becomes a school hero. When the dog is later abducted, a new and kind owner appears, in the form of a girl who names him Bright Eyes; soon her life and that of her mother are transformed from their previously miserable situation. In his next metamorphosis, when the girl can no longer keep him, the dog becomes Paddywhack, owned by Joe Mahoney, a widower. The greyhound not only brings new hope to Joe, but also is instrumental in saving an old people’s home from closure. Finally (through a combination of a keen sense of smell and fortuitous coincidence) the dog meets up again with Patrick, though the boy, happy now he has another dog, is oblivious of the identity of his former pet. Best Mate/Bright Eyes/Paddywhack therefore remains with Joe, and everyone lives happily ever after! A best mate indeed! While the short sections spoken in the voice of the dog seem to me not entirely to ring true, the narrative, generally in the third person, holds the attention, and I suspect many young readers will shed a tear.

The Thing that Mattered Most: Scottish Poems for Children

Julie Johnstone (ed.), illus. Iain McIntosh, Edinburgh, Scottish Poetry Library & Black & White Publishing, 978-1-84502-095-8, £6.99, 2007, 96pp.

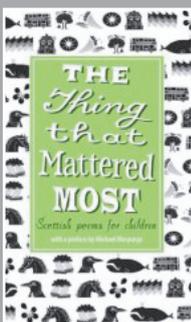
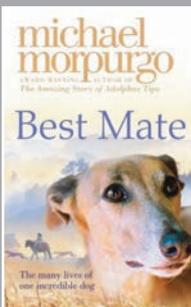
The poems in this most original collection make an immediate impact. I would go so far as to say that there is not one of them that would fail, if properly introduced, to fascinate young readers and encourage them to write their own poems. The sections into which the book is divided – ‘in the water’, ‘in the sky’, ‘in the country’, ‘in the wild’, ‘in Scotland’, ‘in my family’ and ‘in my head’ – are imaginatively chosen and all illustrated beautifully and aptly, but other than a general similarity of theme, the poems in each section are immensely varied in form, length, language and use or otherwise of humour. Many are also typographically original, such as Julia Donaldson’s ‘Roundabout’ (a real encouragement to readers to make up their own word chains) and Edwin Morgan’s ‘The chaffinch map of Scotland’.

In his preface to this book, Michael Morpurgo, after expressing his surprise and delight at the invitation to a non-Scottish non-poet to write it, pays tribute to Scotland and Scottish writers, notably Robert Louis Stevenson. He reminds readers that these poems, universal in their appeal, should be read aloud – a piece of advice that is particularly relevant for those pieces written in Scots, such as ‘The time travellers’ convention’ by Sheen Blackhall:

Mary Queen o Scots arrived hersel
Signed up fur speed-datin.
Said she wis a romantic,
Cud lose her heid ower the richt chiel.

A helpful glossary is included for anyone lacking confidence in their linguistic skills.

One of the most attractive features is the provenance of mini-biographies at the foot of each poem, supplying not only information about each of the 59 poets contributing but also in most cases about the origin of the poem concerned. There are so many pieces that I would like to quote as appetisers for this book: the humorous ‘Cat food rap’ by Anne Armstrong, the end of which made me laugh aloud; Thomas A Clark’s echoic ‘coire fhionn lochan’ with its sound picture of the ‘lapping of the little waves’; or ‘My mum’s sari’ by the Scots–Bengali Bashabi Fraser, with its tactile qualities, are just a few of these. Perhaps Robert Crawford’s ‘Kiss’, which provides the title to the collection also succeeds in displaying some of the reasons why this anthology was the winner of the CLPE Poetry Award for 2007:



For want of a mountain a primrose was lost,
 For want of a primrose a love song was lost,
 For want of a love song a sly kiss was lost,
 And that was the thing that mattered most,
 Yes, that was the thing that mattered most.

Kidnapped – The Graphic Novel

Robert Louis Stevenson's, adapted by Alan Grant, illus. Cam Kennedy, Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke Ltd, 978-1-84299-501-3, £8.99, 2006, 64pp.

I suspect that I am not really the right reader for a graphic novel version of this children's classic! My fond recollections of first meeting *Kidnapped* at an impressionable age (and falling for Alan Breck Stewart!) are in danger of prejudicing me against pictures which can never be as vivid as those in my head, while the reduction of the 225 pages of densely packed text in the Penguin edition to 64 sides with about 100 words per page means that inevitably much of Stevenson's artistry with words has to be lost. The pictures do of course at times substitute for many words – there is no need for a lengthy description of the ruinous state of the House of Shaws since that is shown visually, while the results of David's unsuccessful attempts on the island to allay his hunger with unpalatable shellfish are conveyed in a picture of him vomiting.

In general, however, I think this is a competent enough version which is at its best when nearest to Stevenson's text. Its fidelity to the plot means that a reader who proceeds to the full version is not going to feel cheated. While some of the subtle nuances of the relationship between Alan and David, or the humour of Alan's resentment at being given the alias of 'Mr Thomson' by the lawyer Rankeillor, cannot be adequately conveyed in pictures, at least the younger part of the audience envisaged by this choice of format might not be fully aware of them even in the full text. Where possible, some of the original dialogue is retained, though I don't really understand why Alan's triumphant words 'And, oh man, am I not a bonny fighter?' should be simplified to 'And, am I not a good fighter?'

Cam Kennedy's pictures individualise the characters well, and the background of the ship and the rugged landscape are effectively conveyed. I think there are good grounds for hope that this version, as well as making accessible a classic adventure story to those who cannot face the challenge of nineteenth-century language, might encourage some of them to tackle the real thing aided by a prior knowledge of the plot.

Pat Pinsent

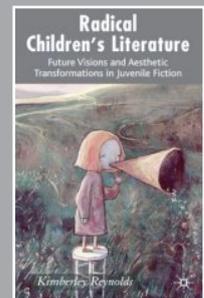
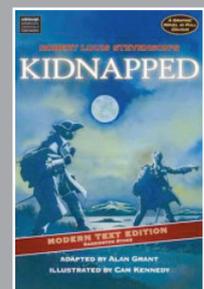
Critical Texts

Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction

Kimberley Reynolds, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 978-1-4039-8561-3, 2007, £45, 248pp.

Readers who subscribe to the frequently expressed opinion that children's literature is innately conservative both in form and in content, an opinion which in some quarters has become orthodoxy since the publication of Jacqueline Rose's prestigious *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* in 1984, should have their preconceptions shaken by this scholarly volume. It makes much use of not yet published work by researchers into recent innovatory texts, and creates a telling case for the counter position that children's literature is currently in the forefront both of the attempt to create 'new visions of how society could function' and of the aesthetics appropriate to such endeavours.

Despite her disclaimer of providing a history of the preceding periods of children's literature, Reynolds' knowledge of the characteristics of books written for young people



throughout the ages informs her discussion of its contemporary forms. She shows how Rose's over-selective choice of texts has led to the exclusion of genres which might at the least unsettle her argument. Reynolds, by contrast, gives ample attention to examples from earlier periods which disprove the contention that children's writers gave little heed to the modernist movement, citing unfamiliar works for children by modernist icons such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Gertrude Stein. She goes on to discuss Tove Jansson's *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and Little My* (1952), 'an unapologetic – indeed a playful and celebratory – response to modernism for children' (p. 35). In fact, like many of the other texts considered, the way this book draws attention to itself by a variety of original devices means that it, and they, could be seen as early forerunners of postmodernism.

Among the genres ignored by Rose nonsense looms large, and Reynolds shows how pioneers such as Carroll and Lear paved the way for Russell Hoban and Eugene Ionesco, among others, to take advantage of the opportunity furnished by children's propensity for rapid movement between the modes of reality and fantasy. Because of their audience's openness to wordplay and unfamiliar concepts, they were able to present more extreme and original ideas than might have been acceptable in writing for adults.

A significant part of this book is devoted to fiction for young adults, of which Reynolds suggests a tripartite division. Firstly there is literature of containment, such as popular books by Louise Rennison, which is highly entertaining but too often presents young people 'as dependent, parasitical, and powerless, a group transfixed by their own narcissistic natures' (p. 80). Her second category is nihilistic fiction, exemplified by darker texts such as several by Robert Cormier; a more recent instance is Anne Fine's *The Road of Bones*, displaying the evil effects on the protagonist of growing up under a totalitarian regime. A more positive view is taken in the books in Reynolds' third category, which show young people as 'ethical, engaged, and effective.' Among others, she cites Ellen Wittlinger's *Hard Love* (1999) and Janet Tashjian's *The Gospel according to Larry* (2003), both of which show male protagonists using writing, within a contemporary internet culture, to come to terms with their sexuality and relationships.

To show how books for the young do not avoid difficult issues, Reynolds looks at fiction which confronts subjects such as self-harm, and also texts which are explicit in their treatment of sex and sexuality. A particularly interesting area is that of frightening fiction. Reynolds distinguishes between earlier writing designed to terrify children into good behaviour, and contemporary texts which are more likely to be related to the adolescent experience of change and the consequent feeling of being threatened, while at the same time being constrained by outside forces. There is an interesting discussion of the way in which the Harry Potter books have gone from presenting potentially frightening figures, such as ghosts, as benign, to their incorporation of aspects that, post-9/11, reflect the fears of today's society. The 'spin-off' films and PC games, however, she sees as defusing some of this element of fear, by oversimplifying the narrative to show an overly heroic Harry.

The final section of this book takes up the question of how the electronic media affect juvenile fiction, both as represented in book form, and in their effects on literature for the future. The hostility to technology that often appears in books, and the less than imaginative way in which the possibilities of cybertext has often been exploited, should not lead us to pessimism about whether IT skills can be harnessed to positive ends. The Murail siblings' 'Golem' series presents cyberspace as 'one of the new horizons for adventure' (p. 176), while the opportunity that the internet presents to younger people to become children's writers themselves, for instance through fanzines, opens up possibilities that it is difficult for older generations to envisage. Reynolds' final message seems to be that it is the generation which has grown up 'accustomed to encountering different versions of the same text in different formats' who have the potential to 'change the meaning of children's literature' (p. 183).

It will be apparent that there is far more in this book than I can do justice to in a short review. It will become an indispensable critical text to students of twentieth- and twenty-first-century children's literature, all the more so for being lucidly written, with all the arguments supported by a wealth of examples. It's a pity that its price may deter some potential purchasers – but at least they should ensure that their libraries have copies.

The Children's Authors on DVD Series

This offers a comprehensive insight into various authors of children's literature. Each DVD takes the viewer on a personal journey into the author's home, their childhood influences, their success and their writing habits. Each DVD includes school children visiting the authors in their own homes and seeing where they work, learning more about the authors and their writing and asking all the questions any reader would want to know the answers to. Each DVD offers inspiration for anyone who loves books and writing, emphasising the power of reading and the imaginative process and influences each of the authors undergoes to create his or her books.

Available for purchase from Jaromin Publishing (www.childrensauthors.tv), this series of six DVDs presents a unique and inspiring insider's look at the lives and works of celebrated authors and illustrators. Interviewed by children, the authors divulge their motivation, influences and working practices in an approachable and accessible manner. The resources provide a wonderful opportunity for schoolchildren to 'meet' famous authors in their own homes and importantly in adult-free zones, thus helping them to develop their own passion for reading, writing and illustrating.

All those who love children's literature and their authors will be hooked and inspired by this series, regardless of their age.

Mermaids and Other Friends: The World of Jane Ray captures the imaginative world of this artist, well known for her magical and glimmering illustrations and stories. It includes an inspiring reading of *Can You Catch a Mermaid* set on a beach. April and Diane visit where she was born and her current home and studio, and discover many gems of information behind the glittering pictures the artist creates. Jane Ray highlights the power of the imagination, from a class creating their own mythical creature to the creativity of her own work. The DVD is truly inspiring and a must-see for any Jane Ray fan!

Breaking Through: The World of Jacqueline Wilson is about the popular, award-winning author, well known for her bestselling novels, which are often about social issues but with diverse and interesting characters. She describes her passions, life experiences and the writing habits that have led her to write such stories. She also visits a library and answers questions, giving information about her life and her work, and providing an interesting and informative insight.

Through a Gorilla's Eyes: The World of Anthony Browne provides a journey into the world of this internationally recognised author and illustrator. He describes the primate influences that run throughout his books as well as his real-life experiences with gorillas. Visiting Anthony Browne's home, April and Rory discover a plethora of information and exciting details about the writer and illustrator, from his writing habits to his family life. Anthony Browne reveals his new book *Silly Billy* and the process that leads up to his finished work, and the worry dolls that inspired the text. He answers questions about his life and his work, as well as teaching a class a game from his childhood. Anthony Browne's books have been popular for many years, with nearly 40 titles to his name.

A Life of Books: The World of Anne Fine offers a charming and warm insight into the inspiration behind her work and stresses the importance of an appropriate working environment.

Amazing Bookshop by the Sea: The World of Catherine and Laurence Anholt quite literally explores a treasure trove of ideas. Not only budding authors, but also eager illustrators, will be energised by this couple's scatty, colourful and exciting projects.

Naughty but Nice: The World of Nicholas Allan is a witty and magical walk-through of the wondrous world of this risqué children's author. This DVD also included details of how to order Nicholas Allan's work.

The DVDs are available for £19.50 each, or £97.50 for all six DVDs, and can be purchased in the following ways:

- 1 Post to: Jaromin Publishing (Children's Authors TV), 66 Sevenoaks Road, Borough Green, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 8AP
- 2 Fax to: 01732 448076
- 3 Phone orders/enquiries: 01732 883123
- 4 Email orders/enquiries: info@childrensauthors.tv
- 5 Buy online at: www.childrensauthors.tv

In addition, the series can be previewed at www.childrensauthors.tv, where free teachers' notes can also be downloaded.

Lucy Felton and Rebecca Jayne Hawker

IBBY News

A message from the president

A lot has happened in the world of IBBY in the past six months. We have new members in Haiti, Serbia and Guatemala, as well as a new individual member in Morocco. The projects that are part of the IBBY Books for Children Everywhere campaign are taking place around the world. Our Children in Crisis project in Lebanon is now fully underway. The Gaza project, which was on temporary hold due to the terrible and tragic events that have taken place there, is now back on track and will commence very soon. And, we are about half way toward our goal of raising funds for a project in Colombia involving 1,000 displaced children in reading groups. We hope that with your help we shall soon reach this goal. A website page is being developed to appeal to donors. Please keep visiting the IBBY website <http://www.ibby.org> for all the latest information and news.

I have just returned from a fascinating trip to Japan and Korea, where I met many members of JBBY and KBBY; made new friends and caught up with old ones. I was invited to speak at the International Library of Children's Literature, which is attached to the National Diet Library in Tokyo, on multiculturalism in children's books. The metaphor 'children need books that are windows and books that are mirrors', which Elisa Bonilla of Mexico first used in Macau, is a very useful way of looking at issues involved not only in multicultural books but in IBBY's work worldwide. I shall be exploring this further in a speech at the pre-conference of IFLA's annual congress next month in Durban, South Africa, when I shall be attending as IBBY's representative under the IBBY/IFLA/IRA agreement.

For all of you who were in Macau at the 2006 IBBY Congress and saw Tayo Shima's beautiful and fascinating presentation on the impact of Japan on the picture book – or, if you missed it, the ILCL has a new site www.kodomo.go.jp/english/index.html which displays some of the research Tayo Shima has done into international picture books over the years. Please visit the site and see this wonderful new resource for picture books. The link can also be found on the IBBY website at www.ibby.org/index.php?id=249. While in Japan, Chieko Suemori, Naoko Torizuka and I were able to meet the people from the Asahi Shimbun who are very pleased with the direction of the IBBY–Asahi Reading Promotion Award. The Empress of Japan, her Majesty Empress Michiko also attended a reception at the ILCL and lent her extraordinary presence to this event. As I was invited to Japan, I took the opportunity to also visit Korea, and was able to spend time on the wonderful Nami Island, which so many of you have recently visited, hosted by the gifted Mr. Kang and the Minn family.

It was a great pleasure to be in Asia when the final decision was made to hire Forest Zhang. His departure will cause pain to our dear friends at CBBY, especially to Mingzhou who has known Forest for sixteen years and worked very closely with him for the past four years. We can only thank Mingzhou and Hai Fei for recognising that their loss will be IBBY's gain. My final reflections before flying home were that

everyone I met in Asia seemed very pleased that Forest would be working at the IBBY Secretariat in Basel.

Our Books for Africa virtual exhibition will be displayed in Durban at a stand that IFLA has graciously donated for this purpose. Carole Bloch from PRAESA in Cape Town will be taking over the management of this exhibition and ensuring that it remains up to date. Liz Page has been working so hard in Basel ensuring that all our work takes place smoothly. We owe not only her, but all of you who have supported her, a great debt of gratitude.

With best wishes to you all.

Patsy Aldana, IBBY president (paldana@groundwoodbooks.com)

Hans Christian Andersen jury 2008

The ten members are Alicia Salvi (Argentina), Annemie Leysen (Belgium), Francine Sarrasin (Canada), Nadia El Kholy (Egypt), Isabelle Nières Chevrel (France), Bill Nagelkerke (New Zealand), Nataliya Avgustinovich (Russia), María Jesús Gil (Spain), Helene Schär (Switzerland) and Junko Yokota (USA). The jury is scheduled to meet in March 2008 and the results will be announced at the Bologna Children's Book Fair on 31 March 2008. The awards will be presented at the 31st IBBY Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark in September 2008.

Mexico reading promotion programme

Despite the international acclaim given to the educational programmes Libros del Rincón/Libros de Aula, their budget for purchases was recently cut, resulting in a serious danger that classroom and school libraries would close. The IBBY president, Patsy Aldana, wrote to the Mexican president to protest, and the outcry at the cancellation has led to reinstatement.

IBBY website

Short descriptions of the nine IBBY projects that were selected from the applications made to the IBBY–Yamada fund can be found on the IBBY website, www.ibby.org. There is also news of members, and of activities in the field of children's literature. The IBBY archives can be accessed through the website.

Hans Christian Andersen Award candidates 2008

The Hans Christian Andersen Awards are presented every two years by IBBY to an author and an illustrator whose complete works have made an important and lasting contribution to children's literature. IBBY national sections from 35 countries have made their selections, submitting the following 30 authors and 30 illustrators as candidates for the 2008 Hans Christian Andersen awards.

Country	Author	Illustrator
Argentina	Beatriz María Ana Ferro	Isol Misenta
Australia	Jackie French	Shaun Tan
Austria	Lene Mayer-Skumanz	Linda Wolfsgruber
Belgium	Anne Provoost	Kitty Crowther
Brazil	Bartolomeu Campos de Queirós	Rui de Oliveira
Canada	Brian Doyle	Pierre Pratt
China	Qin Wenjun	
Croatia		Svjetlan Junaković
Cyprus	Kika Pulcheriou	
Czech Republic	Iva Procházková	Adolf Born
Denmark	Bjarne Reuter	Lilian Brøgger
Egypt	Fatima El Maadoul	
Finland	Irmelin Sandman Lilius	Virpi Talvitie

Country	Author	Illustrator
France	Marie Desplechin	Claude Ponti
Germany	Peter Härtling	Jutta Bauer
Greece	Voula Mastori	Vassilis Papatsarouchas
Iceland	Gudrun Helgadóttir	
Ireland	Kate Thompson	Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick
Italy	Mino Milani	Roberto Innocenti
Japan	Shuntaro Tanikawa	Akiko Hayashi
Lithuania		Kestutis Kasparavicius
Mexico		Mauricio Gómez Morín
Netherlands	Guus Kuijer	The Tjong-Khing
Romania	Iuliu Ratiu	Stan Done
Russia:		Nickolay Popov
Serbia	Dragana Litricin-Dunic	
Slovak Republic	Ján Navrátil	Olga Bajusová
Slovenia		Lila Prap
South Africa	Beverley Naidoo	Piet Grobler
Spain	María Asun Landa	Ulises Wensell
Sweden	Barbro Lindgren	Eva Eriksson
Switzerland	Jürg Schubiger	Hannes Binder
Turkey	Ayla Çinaroglu	Nazan Erkmen
UK	David Almond	Jan Pienkowski
USA	Lloyd Alexander	David Wiesner

Events, Conferences and Resources

Children's Books History Society conference

Crown Court Church of Scotland, Russell Street, Covent Garden, London WC2B 5EZ, Saturday 15 September 2007.

The topic of the conference is 'Scottish children's literature'. Speakers include Brian Alderson, Dennis Butts, Catriona Nicholson and Anne Harvey. Topics include Barrie, Ballantyne, Stevenson, Elinor Lyon, Marjory Fleming ('Pet Marjory') and Scottish publishing. Details from the CBHS Meeting Secretary Bridget Carrington: bridget@primex.co.uk or 01362 860886.

Bath Festival of Children's Literature

21–30 September, 2007.

For information visit www.bathkidslitfest.co.uk.

Children's Bookshow

The Children's Bookshow is organised by Sian Williams and is now in its fifth successful year. The topic this year is 'Outside In – Children's Writers in Translation'. There is a dazzling array of children's writers and performers from Australia, Italy, France, Germany, Japan and the UK. The theme has been chosen to introduce children to the richness of the world's many literatures through fiction and live performance. The tour is timed to coincide with Children's Book Week (1–7 October 2007) organised by Booktrust, together with various local festivals. Events, addressed primarily to school children and their teachers, are either free or at a minimal charge. Details of how to obtain tickets are indicated below.

Thursday 27 September: De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, 10.30 a.m., Daniel Morden (Wales) and Oliver Wilson-Dickson. 01424 229 111; boxoffice@dlwp.com; www.dlwp.com/.

Monday 1 October: Unicorn Theatre, London, 1.30 p.m.,
Boori Monty Pryor (Australia). 020 7645 0560;
boxoffice@unicorntheatre.com; www.unicorntheatre.com/.

Tuesday 2 October: King Henry's School, Ilkley, 1:45 p.m.,
Boori Monty Pryor (Australia). 01943 816714; www.ilkleyliteraturefestival.org.uk/.

Friday 5 October: Library Theatre, Manchester, 10:30 a.m.,
Boori Monty Pryor (Australia). 0161 236 7110;
www.librarytheatre.com/; www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/.

Friday 5 October: Library Theatre, Manchester, 1:30 p.m.,
Lilli Thal (Germany) and Kevin Crossley-Holland. 0161 236 7110;
www.librarytheatre.com/; www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/.

Monday 8 October: Seven Stories, Newcastle, 10:30 a.m.,
Lilli Thal (Germany) and Eva Ibbotson. 0845 271 0777;
www.sevenstories.org.uk/.

Wednesday 10 October: Oxford Playhouse, Oxford, 10:45 a.m.
Kazumi Yumoto (Japan) and Tim Bowler. 01865 305305;
www.oxfordplayhouse.com/.

Thursday 11 October: Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield, 1:00 p.m.,
Kazumi Yumoto (Japan) and Michael Rosen. 01246 345 222;
www.pomegranatetheatre.co.uk/.

Friday 12 October: L'Istituto Italiano di Cultura, London, 6:30 p.m.,
Francesco D'Adamo (Italy) and Michael Rosen. 020 7235 1461;
www.iiclondra.esteri.it/.

Wednesday 5 December: L'Institut Français, London, 6:30 p.m.
Daniel Pennac (France), Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake. 020 7073 1350;
www.institut-francais.org.uk/.

For further information, interviews and images, contact Sallie Robins, publicist at
the Children's Bookshow: 020 7249 4858, 07733 330344;
sr@srpr.net; www.thechildrensbookshow.com/.

Children's Book Week

1–7 October, 2007

This is an annual celebration of reading for pleasure, coordinated by Booktrust who provide resources to help schools and libraries focus on children's reading for a special day or week, and to plan activities and events to encourage children's enjoyment of books. The theme of this year's Book Week (1–7 October 2007) is the environment. See www.booktrust.org.uk/. To book for events or arrange free schools workshops, contact Kate Tull: 0774 0256330. Posters, activity sheets, book recommendations and practical suggestions are to be found in the *Resource Guide*, available from Booktrust: 020 8516 2967; education@booktrust.org.uk; www.booktrused.co.uk/cbw.

British IBBY/NCRCL MA annual conference

Froebel College, Roehampton University, Saturday 10 November 2007

'What Do You See? International Perspectives on Illustration' is the topic of this year's conference. Confirmed speakers include Martin Salisbury, Jan Pienkowski, Satoshi Kitamura, Andre Letria and Anthony Browne. There will be a wide range of workshops, together with exhibitions, wine reception, etc. Contact j.dunne@tiscali.co.uk for further information.

Storytelling conference

Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, 21-23 November 2007

'The Story Telling Ape' – A conference programmed and organised by Cumberland Lodge and the London Centre for Storytelling about storytelling, imagination and society. Speakers include Marina Warner and Ben Haggarty. For detailed programme and registration form, email Janis Reeves, janis@cumberlandlodge.ac.uk.

Federation of Children's Book Groups conference

28–30 March 2008, Exeter University

The topic is 'On the Edge ... Taking off'. See www.fcbg.org.uk, or contact l.grosch@btopenworld.com.

Science Fiction Research Association conference

24–27 June, 2008, Trinity College Dublin

The topic of this SFRA conference is 'Good Writing'. Speakers include Karen Joy Fowler, David Mitchell and Zoran McDonald. Call for papers: 250 word abstract to be sent by 29 February 2009 to sfra2008@googlemail.com. Details are available at www.ucd.ie/historyarchives/conferences/sfra2008.htm.

Association for Research in Popular Fictions conference

10–12 July 2008, Trinity and All Saints College, Leeds

A conference hosted by the ARPF with the topic 'Twenty-First Century Teenager: Media Representation, Theory and Policy'.

Call for papers on subjects such as TV drama, young adult fiction, music, art, citizenship agenda, documentary, photography, journalism, pedagogy, youth culture, social exclusion, child poverty, curriculum and literacy, subculture, new media, disability, teen audiences, magazines/comics, juvenile delinquency, beauty and lifestyle, pop and politics, internet cultures, texting and social ritual, teen nights and street culture, ASBOs and hoodies, comparative studies, etc. Send an abstract of 200–300 words by 15 December 2007 to Nickianne Moody, Convenor ARPF, MCCA, Liverpool John Moores University, Dean Walters Building, St James Road, Liverpool L1 7BR. Email: N.A.Moody@ljm.ac.uk. Fax 0151 6431980.

IBBY Congress 2008: 'Stories in History – History in Stories'

Copenhagen, Denmark, 7–10 September 2008

Proposals for subjects such as: portrayal of children's cultural heritage; living in times of hardship; freedom of speech in children's books; prehistoric times, myths and legends; the Holocaust and its aftermath; apartheid and reconciliation; slave trade and Africans in the diaspora; oral storytelling and the written text; religion and morality in children's books, etc. should be sent to Bent Rasmussen bent.ras@stofanet.dk by 1 October 2007, including title, 200-word abstract, basic biographical data and contact details.

Letterbox Club

This is a new project managed by Booktrust in partnership with the University of Leicester. It focuses on improving the educational outlook for children aged 7–11 in foster families by providing them with a parcel of books, maths activities and educational materials once every month for six months. Each child participating in the scheme will receive the parcels directly addressed to them at home.

Research shows that children in care underachieve in education, but evaluation from pilots of the Letterbox Club showed a demonstrable impact, with the majority of children improving their standardised score in reading. Booktrust has received support from the Department for Education and Skills to extend the programme to 1,200 children over the next two years, with a view to involving all children in this age range in foster care from 2009 onwards. Penguin Books are also supporting the scheme.

The Letterbox Club was launched in June 2007 with the participation of 23 local authorities, spread geographically across the government regions, with a view to all local authorities who wish to, participating from 2009 onwards. If you would like further information contact Marian Keen-Downs, Project Manager, Booktrust: 0208 875 4822; marian@booktrust.org.uk. See also www.booktrust.org.uk/projects/letterbox.php.

Guides and journals

The Best Book Guide, available from Booktrust (www.booktrusted.com) provides information about a range of books published in late 2006/early 2007, with reviews and illustrations.

The Journal of Children's Literature Studies, published by Pied Piper Publishing and edited by Pat Pinsent, appears three times a year and welcomes articles (which will be refereed) on any aspect of children's literature. Note that publication of the journal is not affected by Pied Piper Publishing's recent decision to suspend book publishing for a period.

The Journal of Literary Disability was launched at an inaugural conference in May 2007 and is now online. It can be accessed at www.journalofliterarydisability.com.

news

notes

events

exhibitions

conferences