

What do you see?

As is usual, most of this post-conference issue of *IBBYlink* is devoted to reports on the talks given at the annual joint British IBBY and NCRCL MA conference, held at Roehampton University on Saturday 10 November 2007. The theme was 'What do you see? International Perspectives on Illustration', and we were happy to find that the international aspect was well to the fore. There were plenary speakers from Belgium and Portugal, while the countries of origin of the artists featured in the workshops included Mexico, Taiwan, Finland, South Africa, Australia, Greece, Cyprus, Sweden and Italy. Particularly because of its theme, this verbal account is inevitably impoverished, as so much of the day was a visual feast of colour.

The first speaker was Martin Salisbury, Reader in Illustration at the Cambridge School of Art at Anglia Ruskin University, who presented his audience with a rich variety of material by recent artists representing different traditions; many of the most interesting of these had been his own students. Then Jan Pieńkowski, a distinguished creator of children's books, was interviewed by Nick Tucker. Supported by a background of colourful pictures from his many books, Pieńkowski disclosed that one of the reasons for his characteristic silhouettes and cut-outs

was the way the family curtains were constructed in war-torn Warsaw.

After a short break, two outstanding Flemish illustrators, Sabien Clement and Tom Schamp, compared their approaches and techniques by showing their pictures in parallel. They were followed by Satoshi Kitamura, originally from Japan, who told us about his incursion into the world of English picture books through the agency of the publisher Klaus Flugge of Andersen Press – who also sponsored a wine reception.

After lunch, Penni Cotton brought us up to date on the latest developments resulting from the European Picture Book Collection. Her session was followed by a wide range of workshop presentations; details about many of these are included in this issue of *IBBYlink*. Later, Portuguese Illustrator of the Year in 2000, André Letria, showed in conjunction with Neal Hoskins, his British publisher, some of his often challenging pictures. A different slant on children's picture books was then provided by Prodecepta Das who, in an interview with Prue Goodwin, talked about the use of photographs to illustrate different cultures. Finally, Anthony Browne (whose work had been celebrated at teatime with a cake commemorating

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Marvellous Realities: 25 Years of Illustration for Children in Mexico

Evelyn Arizpe

The first international children's Book Fair held in Mexico took place in 1981, organised by the then recently formed national section of IBBY. It was a watershed in the history and development of children's literature there. Till then, the few books for children on the market were mainly published by a few small companies with few resources or even self-published by the authors. Some larger companies mass produced low-quality texts, while the bulk of publications for children – mainly educational – was financed by the state. The Fair not only brought together national and international publishers, reading promoters, authors and illustrators, but also underlined a huge market potential as hundreds of children and adults flocked to the event. Since then, publishers, books and visitors to the subsequent fairs have increased with every passing year.

Since the beginning of publishing specifically for children in Mexico, however, some editors have recognised the importance of adding attractive illustrations to the texts, though the fact that in some cases these have been by well-known artists has to some extent inhibited the development of a less elitist tradition of illustration, resulting in the extremes of a painterly tradition at one end and an ingenuous amateurism on the other. Illustration has often either reflected the artist's particular interests or tried to match the didacticism that predominated in children's literature in general. In most cases the illustrations were simply a simplistic, literal reflection of the written text. However, since the 1980s there has been an increasing trend to display greater respect for the intelligence of the child audience, resulting in an attempt to integrate word and image at a more meaningful level. Nevertheless, illustration for children has not yet had the recognition it deserves, and most artists struggle to have their work printed, as well as competing with a range of imported texts.

Some common characteristics in illustrative technique can be discerned, such as the strong art forms and bold colours of the Mexican twentieth-century modernist painters, while surrealism remains a major influence, underpinning the presence of what I have called 'marvellous realities' in many illustrations.

The general public remains unaware of developments in illustration for children or in children's literature in Mexico, partly because of a scarcity of bookshops outside Mexico City but also because books are rarely considered aesthetic objects in themselves, even though they are now recognised as having an entertainment as well as a didactic function. More research is needed on who buys children's books and for what purposes, and on the perception of the function of illustration. There is also potential for research into the distinctive features of Mexican picture book art, including how the different communities in the country are depicted. Children's own responses could also provide interesting insights. The influences of both pre-Hispanic and European myth and folk tale, Latin American literature's magical realism and the expectation that fantasy is appealing to children is a possible explanation for the prevalence of the 'marvellous'. The work of some Mexican illustrators' work may be seen on the following websites (most of which are in Spanish and are publishers' websites with catalogues).

Centro de Información y Desarrollo de la Comunicación y la Literatura Infantiles (CIDCLI): <http://www.cidcli.com.mx>. [In English.]

continued from page 1

his latest book) mused on aspects of his career and showed us photographs of some of the international exhibitions at which his work has been displayed.

The capacity audience left visually satiated with the abundance of stunning imagery with which they had been inundated, and, hopefully, with their horizons widened to the wealth of material for children available beyond these shores.

Pat Pinsent

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Piñata Books: <http://www.arte.uh.edu/pinata/publications/pinatabooks.aspx>. [Some pages in English.]

Aesthetic Hegemony: Western Scholars and Native American Culture

Jean Webb

For Western scholars of children's literature it is all too easy to become immune to differing approaches to cultural aesthetics and the relationship with the portrayal of culture in picture books. This paper raised some of the questions surrounding 'aesthetic hegemony' through critical consideration of the work of the Native American illustrator C.J. Taylor and the Native American critic and historian Joseph Bruchac.

A Modern Master Looking Back: The Art of Sven Nordqvist

Magdalena Sikorska

The paper centres on the pictorial art of a Swedish author and illustrator, Sven Nordqvist. First it places his art in the long tradition of European visual culture; it accentuates the power of detail and elements of allegorical representation, both originating in medieval painting. Then it looks at a modern (late twentieth century) realisation of old techniques, observable for instance in Nordqvist's representation of time and the 'Chinese box' composition (pictorial stories within stories). The final section of the paper deals with the elusive postmodern in his pictures: elements of irony, parody and play.

The summer issue of IBBYLink (copydate 30 April) will be devoted to children's literature and central Europe (defined as including Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech republic, Hungary, Croatia and Austria, though we may be prepared to accept borderline states). The autumn issue (copydate 31 July) will look at gendered reading. Articles on other subjects, reviews, reports, information about conferences, etc. are, however, also welcomed.

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Vojtěch Kubašta and His Influence on the Resurgent Pop-up Book Market

Lisa Boggis Boyce

An example of the obvious success of the pop-up book can be seen with the work of Vojtěch Kubašta, a Czechoslovakian artist and originator of pop-up books for children. He made an extraordinarily prolific contribution to the canon of children's literature through work which was so successful and admired that it resulted in the resurgence of the pop-up book market.

Born in Vienna in 1914, Kubašta studied architecture in Prague and graduated in 1938. As a student he demonstrated a flair for drawing and observation, and throughout the Second World War worked as an illustrator. He continued to illustrate children's books for the Czech state publishing house, Artia, and through the late 1930s into the early 1940s he worked as a designer for a noted puppet theatre.

In the late 1950s, Kubašta's work changed direction. His own qualities – an understanding of three-dimensional form from his architect training, a talent for illustrating, his experience and skills gained designing puppet theatres – were combined with the Czech cultural bias towards paper cuts and hand crafts in general, as well as a rich heritage of folk and fairy tales. The consequence was that Kubašta was very well qualified, in both techniques and inspiration, to construct effective and engaging pop-up books and be an agent for the reintroduction of this genre to the canon after its decline since the end of the previous century.

Kubašta produced an original format in which the book is bound along the top and opens in the same way as a laptop computer. Landscape double-page spreads, with minimal text printed parallel to the spine, are folded back and forth in a stepped arrangement to provide stage-like compositions. Added extras on some spreads utilise simple lever and swivel mechanics that can be manipulated independently to enhance movement and direction. His paper engineering demonstrates an economy of form and construction; the books are produced with a minimum quantity of paper and no waste. Their economy of design has an effect on their production costs, resulting in an item that is both desirable and affordable.

It was the discovery of Kubašta's work in the early 1960s at a European Book Fair that convinced Waldo Hunt of Graphics International that pop-up books were a valuable asset. He approached Bancroft, the publishing house that imported and marketed Kubašta's books in the UK, with an order for over one million copies. Sadly, the Artia publishing house refused to produce such a large quantity and Hunt had to persuade Random House and Hallmark to publish pop-up books for children from alternative artists.

Waldo Hunt went on to found Intervisual Books where he combined the talents of illustrators, paper engineers and printers to produce a vast collection of pop-up books, from replica editions of Nister and Meggendorfer titles to original works. Hallmark, Random House and Intervisual Books were agents in the explosion of the pop-up market in the 1980s and 1990s, producing up to 25 million books a year, launching an era often referred to as the 'second golden age of pop-ups', but Vojtěch Kubašta never knew of the pivotal role his work had played.

By his death in 1992, Kubašta had created about 70 published pop-up titles, which numbered 30 million copies and were translated into about 70 languages, including Mandarin and Japanese, a remarkable achievement even by today's standards. But even more powerful than Kubašta's popularity and success was his influence on publishers and artists. Here was a business model that demonstrated that pop-ups could be aesthetically appealing and make a profit, a win-win situation.

Kubašta's work also stands up to critical appraisal and the application of popular contemporary critical theory, proving that pop-up books are a compelling and significant contribution to children's books. Kubašta's international success means that his books have had a great impact on contemporary paper engineers, enabling them

to produce extravagant and exciting work which epitomises Paul Jackson's claim in *The Pop-Up Book* (Owl Books, NY, 1994) that 'Although in the hands of a master a pop-up can be a remarkably sophisticated construction, the techniques themselves are delightfully simple.'

Monkey King goes Bananas: A Traditional Story in a Modern Outfit

Mieke K.T. Desmet

Monkey King is one of the classics of Chinese literature and as such it is often adapted for television and film as family entertainment. It goes without saying that the story is also used to educate children and comes in different formats such as storybooks and illustrated books. *Monkey King Goes Bananas* by Shu-min Cho is one of these adaptations. It takes part of the story and changes it into a picture book with an accompanying guide to Peking opera and also includes the material to make a puppet theatre and puppets to play the story. The story itself was also turned into a performance, mixing real actors and puppets and presenting itself in the style of the tea-house theatre, including different stories in one. This paper analyses the traditional aspects of the illustrations and also looks at how the picture book draws on different traditions. The book is English and Chinese and contains a lot of cultural explanation to make the Chinese work more accessible to a modern audience. The postmodern and intertextual features of its approach to the classic material were also discussed in the workshop.

'Translating' Visuals

Joanne Collie and Neal Hoskins

This seminar discussed the question of the degree of importance of taking visuals into consideration when translating picture books from other cultures for children in Britain, and some of the cultural implications involved.

- Should children always be securely on familiar territory or should visuals be used to give some exposure to diverse cultures, ways of living, ways of seeing things, and ways of relating to people and events? How, for example, do children recognise actual foreign places?
- Should imagery that is culturally sensitive for some communities in our diverse society always be avoided, or, conversely, can visuals be used to raise awareness of religious or ideological differences about, for example, bodily functions, birth, death or depression? How do readers come to terms with and appreciate the darker tones of some European illustration and styles?
- What about gender, religious, or ethnic stereotyping – do these constitute a case for changing visuals or could they also contribute to inter-ethnic dialogue?
- Finally, to what extent can visuals be left to speak for themselves? Do they sometimes have to be added to, changed or even explained?

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'That Wasn't There a Couple of Minutes Ago': Australian Rainforest Meets the South Downs

Sandra J. Williams

In *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*, Jeannie Baker, through a series of brilliantly conceived collages, invites her reader to move backwards and forwards in time in order to explore the issues of development in the last pristine rainforest remaining in Australia. In this paper I offered an analysis of how a group of British Year 4 children in a Brighton primary school engaged and made sense of this text as they spent four half-hour sessions examining and discussing the book with excitement and enthusiasm. These discussions were recorded and then categorised, drawing out how the children observed, interpreted, drew from their existing knowledge, puzzled and made sense of the import of the book. The depicted lush vegetation and gigantic trees contrasts strongly with the bare, treeless chalk of the South Downs. Thus of significance was the pupils' palpable sense of wonder about the rainforest and the aboriginal people who once were its inhabitants. It was clear from this series of reading events that such a rich picture book offers the apprentice reader a powerful stimulus for making meaning about the unfamiliar. The collage form also attracted a powerful and meaningful response.

Reading Pictures: Books Set in Africa

Fiona Collins

Picture books which are set in the vast African continent often do not reflect the reality of life and the cultural diversity of the different countries which make it up. Books such as the hugely popular *Handa's Surprise* by Eileen Browne show the landscape of the savannah and exotic animals, but the cleverly constructed narrative is culturally one-sided. In contrast, *Home Now* by Lesley Beake focuses on deeper issues affecting many countries in Africa today, that of the spread of Aids and orphaned children. Niki Daly's books also reflect a more up-to-date view of Africa as his exploration of day-to-day life in urban South Africa reflects the everyday lives of people within a culturally different setting. Books such as these can enrich children's understanding of the world, both culturally and emotionally.

South African Illustration

Dianne Hofmeyr

This presentation showed some examples of recent books by South African illustrators. These included a book illustrated by Fiona Moodie, based on Cicely Mary Barker's *A World of Flower Fairies*, this time done with South African indigenous flowers: arums, red disas, pincushions and proteas, and with indigenous fairies. There was also a quilted story that creates a marvellous sense of the local. The work of Niki Daly and Mama Jambo had some attention, together with Jude Daly's illustration of my own version of a Portuguese story set on St Helena Island, *The Faraway Island*.

Go Ask Alice: The Image of the Child in the 60s Counterculture

Peter Cook

This project aims firstly to explore the ways in which the idea of childhood helped to shape and define the counterculture of the 1960s; and secondly, it traces a new openness to the cultures and values of other parts of the world. In December 1966 Jonathan Miller's film of *Alice in Wonderland* was first shown on UK television. Miller uses Carroll's story to satirise the pomp and prejudice of imperial values. But Ravi Shankar's inspired music for the film, while gleefully depicting monarchy, church and state with military drums, brass bands and choral hymns, also suggests a radical alternative in the figure of Alice herself, always associated in the film with Shankar's own sitar, drones and percussion. Thus, in Miller's *Alice*, the image of the child is crucially linked with the exploration of non-European cultures, and presented as an alternative way forward. This seminal work set the tone for much that was to follow.

A few weeks later Pink Floyd were in the studio creating their first album; its title, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, taken from Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. Syd Barrett's lyrics are shot through with images from children's literature and its illustrations; one extraordinary song, 'Mathilda Mother', describes the effect of a mother reading aloud on her child's imagination. The modal intervals of Rick Wright's keyboards create a decidedly oriental atmosphere.

At the same time the Beatles were in the studio creating 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds', drawing again on Lewis Carroll ('looking-glass ties') as well as on three-year-old Julian Lennon's painting. Similarly, Traffic used a child's voice reading a story in 'Hole in My Shoe'. Both songs use sitar: it is no coincidence that the sound of the sitar entered rock music at precisely the same moment as the image of the child. Jefferson Airplane offered a hallucinogenic take on the *Alice* stories in 'White Rabbit', and Jimi Hendrix evoked 'butterflies and zebras, Romanies, fairy tales' in the sublime 'Little Wing'. The world of childhood is evoked and celebrated in these songs, all from 1967, as a place of freedom, playfulness and imagination, in conscious rejection of older values and prejudices.

This music suggested to adults that it was alright to stay in contact with childhood. But of course the counterculture was not just a matter of music: posters, light shows, clothes and magazines such as *IT*, *OZ* and *Gandalf's Garden* all created a lifestyle in which adulthood is crucially redefined. And young people identified with it to the extent that songs about childhood became obligatory: the Rolling Stones recorded 'Dandelion', The Who produced 'Happy Jack' and supergroup Cream came up with 'Pressed Rat and Warthog'. Many mainstream pop acts jumped on the bandwagon, without really understanding the sensibilities or motives of the great originators, sometimes with less than happy results.

Nevertheless, the notion of adults who kept in touch with, and to a large extent lived for, the child-like side of their nature continued to be cultivated and developed by other artistes well into the 1970s. As late as 1978, Kate Bush wrote 'The Man with the Child in his Eyes' for her first album *The Kick Inside*. Kate Bush was discovered by Dave Gilmour of Pink Floyd, and it was the Floyd who, having helped usher in the phenomenon, put the last nail in its coffin with 'Another Brick in the Wall' in 1979. By then the visionary Syd Barrett was long gone, and where he, John Lennon and Jimi Hendrix had defined childhood, and themselves, with images of light, colour and movement, Roger Waters in 1979 defined childhood by what he rejected: 'no education, no thought control, no dark sarcasms' etc. What began as a dazzlingly hopeful, joyful alternative, ended in despair and nihilism.

A generation of young people have grown up listening to this music and subscribing to the lifestyle it advocates. How all this may have affected their practice and attitudes as parents is clearly of vital importance to all of us concerned with the education and well-being of children.

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A Wonderland of Pictures to Alice from Italy

Stefania Tondo

Because of its visual origin as an illustrated book, and its enduring international fame, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is one of the best examples of the inter-connection between translations and illustrations into a foreign language. Two recent publications show the significance of its Italian version.

Emanuele Luzzati's scenographic illustrations in *Alice nel paese delle meraviglie* (1998, Edizioni Nuages, Milan) are associated with the text of the first Italian translation (1870–72) by T. Pietrocòla Rossetti, a friend of Carroll and a member of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Anglo-Italian family. Lello Esposito's illustrations in *Alice 'int' 'o Paese d' 'e Meraviglie* (2002, Franco Di Mauro Editore, Naples) accompany a text which is a recent artistic metamorphosis into Neapolitan language and culture by R. D'Ajello.

Esposito's work references Lewis Carroll's manuscript drawings, while Luzzati's production is faithful to Tenniel's original illustrated version. Nevertheless, both have created authentic, new and singular works of art, representative of their specific style and art language: scenography for Luzzati, and painting and sculpture for Esposito. Both also reflect their specific regional and cultural codes: Luzzati's Genoese and Italian-Jewish artistic formation and mastery in the art of stage scenery, and Esposito's Neapolitan background and pictorial translation of traditional icons into contemporary terms.

These two examples open up a response to the question 'What do you see?' in the title of this conference. When illustrations come from the hands of real artists, their creations are works of art in themselves; while giving new life to a literary classic from the past, they seem to cross the boundaries of illustrations and pictures, and to set before the eyes of today's readers/beholders 'a wonderland of pictures' for today's children and adults – a gift 'to Alice from Italy'.

Visualising Alice's Adventures in Cyberland: *Inanimate Alice* and New Media Literature

Tammy Mielke

Childhood has been visualised by many illustrators, in book after book. But this Alice, the protagonist of *Inanimate Alice*, does not exist on paper, but in the invisible/visible world of cyberspace. This is not the Alice of Lewis Carroll's imagination. Instead *Inanimate Alice*, a literary project which is still under construction and offered to readers for free on the web (<http://www.inanimatealice.com/episode1/>), offers a new, modern Alice who is a citizen of the world while remaining a child. *Inanimate Alice* is an exploration of 'the diversity of modern children's book illustration' by its very form. In content, it reflects 'cultural dialogue and exchange' as well as allowing readers to experience new ways of reading.

In what ways is Alice new? How does Brad, the only other character besides Alice's parents, reinforce Alice as a child? As a hypertext, *Inanimate Alice* is a new adventure in both plot and format. I explored the world of hypertext intended for children and young adults and discussed the effects of new media on the reader's relationship with narrative. How does this medium expand the world of reading for the child? How can the visual be interpreted as text? While the format of hypertext may be perceived as a new and exciting form of text, does the content of literature suffer because of the form? Should *Inanimate Alice* be considered a text? How can we as literary critics judge a text created through new media? Do our tools for the evaluation of literature need reconsideration for literature produced through a new medium?

Using the theoretical work of Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* and Gunther Kress in *Literacy in the New Media Age*, I discussed the presentation of literature through new media and analysed the ways in which authors move from traditional 'narrative to display as ways of organising representation of the world' (Walker).

Students as Illustrators: Illustrated Storybooks in Greek Primary Art Education

Vasiliki Labitsi

As a primary teacher and a children's book illustrator I have always been keen on bringing my professional identities together, investigating ways through which the art of book illustration could be utilised in Greek primary schools and contribute to the development of the art curriculum in my country. These concerns informed my doctoral studies. My investigation of visual narrative in children's books and drawings provided a theoretical and analytical basis for relevant curriculum initiatives. Returning to teaching after completing my PhD was a great opportunity to put into practice these ideas. The students' knowledge of my professional involvement stimulated their interest in creating their own books. In this context, a three-month book-making project was designed and took place with a Year 4 Greek class in a small suburban primary school.

The aim was for students to develop visual narrative skills, learn about the illustrator's profession and how illustrated books are produced, and gain an understanding of the illustrated book as art, object and product. There were four stages. First, the students studied a collection of illustrated children's books. They investigated the structure of the narratives and examined the visual elements in depth. Then a professional illustrator visited the class. This offered the opportunity to develop an understanding of the processes of commission, design and creation and to enjoy original illustrations of books they were familiar with. I also brought my own work into the classroom. The class focused on the work in draft sketches and considered the body of the preliminary drawing work necessary in order for a visual narrative in a book to be developed.

In the next stage the students created their own stories. Some of these had strong autobiographical references, while others used elements from stories they knew or had read in the previous stages as inspiration. The children shared their ideas and worked on problem solving in the development or ending of their narratives. In the fourth and final stage, they produced quite detailed storyboards, a useful 'map' in order to design and illustrate their books. After producing their own rudimentary books using a variety of techniques (e.g. concertina), they transferred their text into them and produced the final illustrations.

The project provided valuable connections between different areas of the curriculum, especially art, language and literature. It was a rewarding experience for all those involved. The students worked enthusiastically and created unique and original multimodal texts. They had the opportunity to develop new drawing skills, to develop a specialised art and illustration vocabulary, and utilise their self-made books as a means through which they communicated personal concerns, feelings and future aspirations that were important to them.

Tradition and Contemporary Creative Expression in Cypriot Picture Books

Dora Oronti

Cypriot art starts with the Independence, but the first Cypriot graphic designers started working as illustrators only 25–30 years ago. In their work two basic elements are interwoven: discipline and freedom. Illustration, especially in children's books, is a continuous exercise of discipline, yet there is also a need to allow a child's vision to breathe. There has to be a balance between the elements such as line, shape, colour, form, texture and free space. At the same time children need to be encouraged to acquire the self-confidence to express themselves in art as well as 'reading' an illustrated book.

As an illustrator, I am reminded of my own childhood. I recall my mother, who was a dressmaker, using small scraps of material to create costumes for the carnival, and these creations have inspired my own. During the workshop I showed some of my own illustrations for children's books and discussed the motives behind their creation.

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Visualising Europe through Picture Books: Where Are We Now?

Penni Cotton

This presentation was devoted to a brief history of the European Picture Book projects, their aims and objectives, methodologies, website activities and inter-cultural links with other children's literature websites. It concluded with a glance at the way forward. Because of the variety of the projects, it is convenient to present them separately and in bullet-point format. More information in each instance may be derived from the website.

1 The European Picture Book Collection (EPBC): 1996–2000

www.ncrcl.ac.uk/epbc

Aim: To help children throughout the European Union to understand more about each other and what it means to be European, through:

- reading the visual narratives of carefully selected European picture books;
- focusing on the universal themes that permeate the books.

2 The European School Education Training Course (ESET): 2001–2004

www.ncrcl.ac.uk/eset

Aims and objectives:

- to create an online, teacher training course in several languages using the EPBC materials;
- to help children gain greater linguistic, literary and cultural understanding, as well as a sense of what it means to be European;
- to provide a structure for teachers/teacher educators;
- to create three modules: Language, Literature and Culture;
- to develop five detailed sessions for each module, which include practical activities;
- to make the course flexible so that teachers/teacher educators can use all or parts of the course, depending on their needs.

3 Books and Reading for Inter-Cultural Education (BARFIE): 2001–2004

www.ncrcl.ac.uk/epbc/EN/books/httpwww.ncrcl.ac.uk/epbcBARFIEbooksbook_images.asp

Aims and objectives:

- to create a catalogue of multicultural children's books from many different European countries to promote inter-cultural education;
- to select 10 books from each of the 11 partner countries;
- to develop materials that would help teachers to use these books inter-culturally in all 11 countries;
- to add books suggested by colleagues in other European countries;

- to create a website that would allow access to these books through keywords such as acceptance of difference, friendship, tolerance, multicultural, co-existence, conflict resolution, peace etc.;
- to create a BARFIE picture book collection (available at www.ncrcl.ac.uk/epbc).

4 Electronic Digital Media Reporter (EDMR): 2005–2008

www.edmreporter.net

Aims and objectives:

- to provide a tool that will help educationalists to use multicultural children's literature websites in an inter-cultural way;
- to create ways of allowing children throughout Europe to work with multicultural and multilingual websites;
- to encourage children to find ways of being tolerant with each other and enhance their cultural knowledge;
- to find ways of developing cultural dialogues and mutual understanding in order to develop a culture for peace;
- to develop inter-cultural teacher training materials, using carefully chosen European children's literature websites, under the headings: Developing On-line Learning, Literary Competences, Reading Promotion and Cultural Understanding.

Examples from the Cultural Understanding module show how methodologies from the first three websites can be used in the fourth: initially by focusing on these 'ready-made' activities, and then by linking them to other internet material. Details of the teaching activities that have been developed so far are available at www.edmreporter.net, and will also be published in the IBBY publication of the proceedings of the 2007 conference.

The way forward

- Ongoing creation of visually interactive multicultural website material that can be used inter-culturally.
- Trialling and dissemination of materials within the EDMR countries.
- Making materials and information about suggested websites available across Europe.
- Ensuring that materials can be adapted for international use with any children's literature websites

and ...

- Plans for the next European Picture Book project!

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The Balance between Sameness and Difference in Contemporary European Picture Books

Petros Panaou

The European Union is characterised by a constant effort to balance the national and the European – the importance of this balance is, in fact, one of the central pillars on which the European experiment has been built. As Seamus Deane declares, ‘In Europe the category of the aesthetic has as its project the reconciliation of the specific and the universal.’

The European Picture Book Collection (EPBC) is an EU sponsored project that began its life in 1993. It is used in numerous European schools in an endeavour to bring to children across Europe at least one picture book from each member state. Several picture books from the EPBC explore the interplay between the specific and the universal, as well as the dual process of integration and regionalisation, in an attempt to reflect both locality and universality, both difference and homogeneity. The child is positioned in the middle of this ‘field of tension’, functioning as the catalyst that will make this balance attainable.

In Mairi Hedderwick’s *Katie Morag and the New Pier* (1993), the child is asked to facilitate a compromise. As Katie is positioned in the middle of a territorial and cultural field of tension, the forces of globalisation and regionalisation exercise their pull on her, leading her to a position of consensus between the two, being, in effect, the ‘human pier’ that connects the island to the mainland. Thus the child in this book is positioned within an EU ideology that favours connectivity.

In this age of globalisation, a postmodern child is often expected to maintain the fragile balance between facilitating progress on the one hand and staying true to place and communal identity on the other. The EPBC picture book from Germany strives to achieve a similar balance in a different situation. Eva Muggenthaler’s *Der Schäpfer Raul* [Raul the Shepherd] (2000) features a main character who leaves his homeland region but shortly returns to it. Whereas in the case of *Katie Morag and the New Pier* it is the outside world that invades the protagonist’s land, in this picture book the protagonist encounters the outside world during a journey he willingly initiates. Raul’s region literally follows him wherever he goes. He cannot simply leave behind the countryside where he’s lived all his life; he ‘carries’ with him the meadows and the sheep that graze there, because the land and the animals are a part of who he is. The exceptional illustrations visualise this concept in a dramatic and at the same time humorous manner. The child reader is once again encouraged to keep a balance between regionalisation and integration by staying faithful to locality, while also remaining open to other cultures and ways of living.

The only book in the collection that seems to argue against the protagonist’s local culture is Ulitzka and Gepp’s *Das Land der Ecken* [The Land of Corners] (1993). The angular boy protagonist rejects his angular culture and runs away from his homeland, following a circular boy on his scooter. The land of his origin is set up as the reverse image of what an ideal EU member state should be. Through a depiction and rejection of this counter-example, this Austrian picture book reaffirms the ideal liberal state. Despite the initial impression, child readers are once again encouraged to value their own cultures while being open to, and tolerant of, the others’ cultures.

All three picture books depict a ludic interplay between sameness and difference, locality and universality, the regional and the national, the national and the European; an interplay that is sometimes antagonistic and sometimes collaborative. And in all three picture books, children are assigned a subject position between these binary oppositions. Within this space, they are encouraged to adopt a positive stance towards other peoples, places and cultures, while preserving an even more positive stance towards their own regional, ethnic or national identities.

Translated Picture Books in Language Pedagogy Settings: The Case of *The Cat in the Hat*

Elena Xenii

This paper reports on a project that took place in the Department of Education, University of Cyprus during the Fall Semester 2006, in relation to a module on 'Learning to Read and Write'. The activities suggested by primary education students for teaching the well-known picture poem book *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr Seuss within the realm of communicative competence and translation pedagogy were presented, and the extent to which students relate their activities to pictures and illustrations was discussed. Different approaches to the pictures presented by the students were analysed, along with examples of their work. This topic provided the opportunity for an attempt to shed some light on translated picture books in school settings.

Take One Tale: Illustrated Versions of 'Red Riding Hood' from Italy, Poland and Belgium

Nikki Gamble and Ann Lazim

In this participative session, illustrated versions of 'Red Riding Hood' from several European countries were introduced. Picture books from Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Slovenia and Denmark were used to explore the styles, techniques and cultural influences on the illustrations. How these reflect a variety of approaches to the story was discussed.

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Picture Thinking: Picture Books and the Development of Visual Literacy in Young Children

Kate Noble

My PhD study examined how visual literacy develops in young children by looking at the ways they use the modes of talk and drawing in order to make sense of complex multimodal picture books. Visual literacy has become a familiar term within educational research, but there is no shared understanding of its meaning. Previous research in the area has focused more on the content of children's spoken and drawn responses rather than looking in detail at the process of making sense from visual texts. I have found that visual literacy is an active, interactive and creative process based on a multimodal dialogue between children and picture books in the context of their personal and textual experiences up to that point. This definition embraces the opportunities for creative and idiosyncratic interpretation and response and allows many alternative creative possibilities.

Children's learning has long been recognised to be an active and multimodal process, manifested through their physical exploration of the world around them, through action, gesture and in the things they make. In the fast-changing, modern world, visual modes of communication are becoming increasingly dominant and pervasive with the growth of film, television and computer-based media. However, the emphasis within our classrooms is still predominantly verbal. Research on visual literacy and young children has often focused on verbal responses, leaving the visual aspects of response poorly represented. A visual medium such as a picture book demands a visual response true to its original form and so any discussion of children reading picture books must incorporate drawing and gesture.

My own research extends the work of Arizpe and Styles (2003) to look at what picture books can show us about visual literacy in young children. I interviewed 24 children aged five, seven and nine years who were talking and drawing in response to three different picture book retellings of the fairy story 'The Frog Prince'. The use of video allowed the simultaneous recording of the 'full repertoire of modes' described by Kress (1997) and others, by capturing non-verbal communication such as gesture, expression and other physical responses. Video footage of the children making their drawings was analysed alongside the final drawings and the children's comments whilst reading the books.

Once I began to examine the children's interactions with sophisticated multimodal picture books, it became apparent that visual literacy is not just about reading pictures. It is about being able to communicate visually through line, gesture and words. Visual literacy starts with careful and detailed looking but is also found in the active process of reading and drawing. I found that visual literacy could be said to consist of three distinct but interdependent aspects. Its first aspect is the basic level of decoding images and interpreting what the lines, shapes and colours on the page represent, and all the children in this study had achieved this and could communicate it through their talk and drawings. The second aspect of visual literacy extends this basic level of understanding through critical thinking, and in this challenging and cognitive dimension I found a clear developmental progression. The children used many different strategies to make sense of what they saw, including inference, deduction, and making connections and associations. They controlled their looking and making by directing their attention and regulating their thinking. The third aspect of visual literacy is concerned with the aesthetic of picture books and encompasses emotional and personal responses. Looking, talking, drawing and reading are multi-sensory experiences and young children respond to visual texts emotionally as well as intellectually.

Looking at picture books with children offers a glimpse into their worlds through their talk, drawings, gesture and the personal narratives that accompany them. Picture books offer opportunities for careful contemplation and animated discussions, for the exploration of alternative viewpoints, and encounters with new imaginative realms and realities; they present possibilities for an infinite range of transformations. Furthermore, children's careful and deliberate thinking as they

interpret images and plan and make their own drawings demonstrates that visual literacy is a cognitively demanding and stimulating process. My research demonstrates how by nurturing young children's looking and supporting their developing visual literacy we can also begin to foster the development of intelligent thinking.

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Sharing Reading: The Message of Illustrations for Vulnerable Children

Stella Thebridge

Anecdotal evidence suggested to me that images of adults reading or sharing a book in with a child can send mixed messages. Foster carers in particular have to tread a fine line while encouraging a love of reading when sharing books or listening to a child reading. The connotation of a bedtime story can be negative for some children, and carers have to ensure there is no ambiguity about any actions in relation to children in their care.

The workshop looked at views from a range of sources including parents and carers in Warwickshire, library staff and publishers. Picture books which either occasioned a negative reaction or gave ambiguous messages were passed round. The workshop examined:

- the role of illustration in picture books and the effect on the reader/viewer;
- similarities to other aspects in the content of illustrations, notably ethnic and family diversity and the inclusion of disabled people in illustrations;
- the notion of sharing books, and guidelines on safe caring for foster carers;
- views of parents and carers from baby and toddler sessions in Warwickshire;
- the perceived and potential role of parents and caregivers;
- the perceived and potential role of teachers, librarians, publishers and illustrators.

Workshop members concluded that stakeholders should not go down the route of banning books nor of discouraging book sharing. It was felt that there should be a greater awareness of the potential for illustrations to be interpreted differently, and that for some young people, seemingly innocuous pictures could give rise to frightening perceptions.

Caregivers need to be alert to the nature of the books chosen by young people. They cannot hope to vet all such books, nor should they seek to censor what is read or borrowed from the school or library. Rather there should always be opportunities for safe sharing and discussion. A book at bedtime need not be shared in bed or even in the bedroom.

Illustrators and publishers need to continue their move to a greater diversity in the content of illustrations, including particularly a wide range of ethnic and family types in books and incorporated in as natural a way as possible. The ten guiding principles of Scope's 'In the Picture' project were quoted as a useful guide to a practice of inclusive illustration (http://www.childreninthepicture.org.uk/au_10guide.htm). It was noted that the term 'disabled' could well be interchanged with terms like 'looked after' to encourage illustrators and their publishers to be as inclusive as possible.

The workshop grew from information gathered as part of Warwickshire Libraries' 'Switched on to Reading' project (funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation) – a partner-

ship between Warwickshire Library service, its education service for looked-after children (TELAC), the fostering and adoption service and the county arts service. While not part of the remit, this issue became apparent during information gathering for the project, which is aiming to make library services more accessible to looked-after children and their foster families in the county.

Depicting the Unthinkable: Graphic Imagery of the Holocaust in Children's Literature

Rebecca R. Butler

At the IBBY conference in 2006 I spoke about the textual depiction of the Holocaust in fiction for children and young adults. I selected several texts and submitted them to the test of certain criteria. Since the theme for the 2007 conference was international illustration, I examined the ways in which the Holocaust is depicted in children's picture books. The representation of the Holocaust in pictures is an even more demanding task than its description in prose, since accurate images of what actually occurred may easily become too frightening for young readers to assimilate. This danger becomes even more acute when (as is often the case) the picture book in question is aimed at readers in the 5–10 years bracket.

The books selected for assessment were *Erika's Story* by Ruth Vander Zee, *Let the Celebrations Begin!* by Margaret Wild and Julie Vivas (illustrator) and *Rose Blanche* by Ian McEwan. Both the Vander Zee text and the McEwan text are illustrated by Roberto Innocenti. These books have international publishing histories: *Erika's Story* was first published in the USA, *Let the Celebrations Begin!* was first published in Australia, and *Rose Blanche* is based on a story by Christophe Gallaz published in France in 1985. The copyright in this edition is held by an American publisher but the English adaptation is by Ian McEwan.

Images from these books were assessed in terms of the balance they strike between veracity and acceptability. Is this what really happened, or is it glossed over? How do the illustrators make it possible for young readers to tolerate the material? For what age ranges are these books suitable? If the pictures are accompanied by text, how does the text relate to the visual material? Should the books be read with an mediating adult, and if so, what role should the adult play in the readership experience – neutral observer or advocate of civilised values? Do the illustrators suggest which of these interpretive roles they might favour?

The juxtaposition of text and pictures creates more space for interpretation by young readers, allowing them to supply what the text doesn't say, as much as what it does. These gaps, which invite reader interpretation, were termed 'discontinuities' by Wolfgang Iser. My conclusion from the examples of these three books is that the presence of images alongside texts about the Holocaust creates more Iserian discontinuities than are likely to be present with text alone. In this way the space for interpretation and adult mediation is dramatically widened. Sometimes, as in the case of the Wild–Vivas book, the scope for interpretation is so wide as to create the risk that the adult mediator may be led to usurp the young reader's interpretive role. That book's strength is also its greatest weakness. The other two books escape that danger by offering a narrower range of interpretive options, having fewer discontinuities and a more strictly defining text.

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Two Flemish Illustrators, Tom Schamp and Sabien Clement

(Collated by Jennifer Harding from reports of the presentation by Sarah McIntyre and Katrien Schamp.)

Flemish illustrators Sabien Clement and Tom Schamp gave a joint talk to the IBBY conference audience. Clement remarked that they found it a challenge presenting their work as a pair. Instead of taking turns, they presented their work together on-screen, showing the different ways their images tackled similar themes. Schamp's work featured folk-art inspired illustrations with solid blocks of colour, while Clement's showed work with a lighter, more line-based touch.

They compared the following books which have similar themes, with Clement's the first of each pair in the list. The titles are given here in English. (Translations from the Flemish and Dutch by Magda van Hoyweghen and from the French by Jan Trefusis.)

Louis the King of the Penguins and *The Baby from the [Kangaroo] Pouch*

The characters in these books are not humans. Mr and Mrs Kangaroo are very happily married. The pouch is ready for the baby but the longed for event doesn't happen. However the pouch is filled by an adopted baby and all is happy. Louis is a penguin but a muddled one. He is also a king with friends and enemies. Is he a bird? If so should he try to fly? Fragile, atmospheric illustrations fit the style of the text.

Now the Truth Comes Out and *The ABC of Carnival*

The illustrations of these alphabets are in complete contrast. Clement uses animals in an innovative way; whereas Schamp integrates the letters into each illustration, rather than choosing an illustration to match the letter.

Linus and *Otto Drives Back and Forth*

These two books are both about a young boy. Linus is an only child and to counteract his loneliness he invents a big brother Boris with whom he has adventures. Otto joins his father on a ride to the city and especially enjoys seeing all the special vehicles on the streets.

Clement discussed how she is no stranger to artistic collaboration, having jointly illustrated the book *Linus* with fellow illustrator Mieke Versyp.

The following titles which Schamp illustrated were mentioned during the presentation.

Mary Jolie, fille du Mississippi

Noël blanc, Noël noir

Le livre des peut-être

Le livre des Si...

Le livre des petits pourquoi

Both Clement and Schamp presented book projects that can be viewed on their websites http://www.sabienclément.be/index_content.asp and <http://www.tomschamp.com>. Illustrations from some of the titles mentioned can also be seen on the publishers' websites.

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The Richmal Crompton Collection

4 October 2007 was a great day in the Learning Resources Centre at Roehampton University – the Richmal Crompton Collection was moved to its new home here.

The family of Richmal Crompton's niece Richmal Ashbee had been looking for somewhere for the materials to be stored safely and where they could be made available to researchers. Their invitation to bid for the collection came to us at a time when we had just opened a new archive and special collections area, including a climate-controlled strongroom and a supervised reading room; this area also houses our specialist Children's Literature Collection. Given the university's very strong interest in children's literature at all levels of study, we were very keen to take the collection.

The collection contains many editions of the *William* stories, with a variety of covers and in a wide range of languages, as well as her much less-known output of novels for adults. An unusual feature is that we also have Richmal Crompton's personal library, from which we can see the eclectic nature of her own reading.

As yet we have not had an opportunity properly to explore the wealth of archive material available, but it ranges from typescripts of radio plays and jottings of ideas for *William* stories through to fan letters and drawings sent to her by children, to accounts and even cheque-book stubs. At present we are working from a list of the materials, but are planning to catalogue the collection within the next year, making it fully searchable through our library catalogue.

Researchers from both within the university and outside are welcome to visit to consult the materials. For opening hours and the latest information, consult our website at <http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.uk/library/index.html>.

Sue Mansfield

Children's Books History Society conference

Crown Court Church of Scotland, Covent Garden, London, 15 September 2007.

This day conference entitled 'Scotland and Its Influence on Children's Literature' was an alternative to rather more expensive evening meetings. An interesting array of talks began with Anne Harvey, who told us about 'Pet Marjory', the publication of whose journals led to her becoming, at nine years old, the youngest person with an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Dennis Butts then spoke about the connections between R.M. Ballantyne and R.L. Stevenson, putting forward a reading of *Kidnapped* as both a celebration of Scottish culture and a strong plea for the retention of the union with England. After lunch, Brian Alderson made manifest the extremely important role of Scottish publishers in the dissemination of children's literature, both north and south of the border. Finally Catriona Nicholson spoke about the work of Elinor Lyons, whose Scottish novels present children confronting the challenges of the natural environment in the context of increasing tourism and a declining population. Her talk was a worthy culmination to a very varied and informative day.

The Children's Bookshow

The Italian Cultural Institute, London, 12 October 2007.

Francesco D'Adamo and Michael Rosen were the speakers at this event, part of the Children's Bookshow programme for 2007, which last year presented a national tour of children's writers in translation. Siân Williams, the organiser of the Children's Bookshow, is also the translator of the book whose English version was launched at this occasion, *My Brother Johnny* (see review elsewhere in this issue). Because this book constitutes a very strong anti-war statement – its Italian subtitle is 'A book against all wars' – the lively discussion included questions about any problems concerning its Italian publication and the question of polemical fiction.

Tamarind book launch

South Africa House, London, 22 October 2007.

It is a rare honour to attend a book launch at which the author, the illustrator and the heroine of a book are all present, and at which the heroine reads the entire text to those present! This was the case at the Tamarind launch of their latest title, *South African Animals*. While the book lovers gathered in the Edwardian splendour of South Africa House, with its reminders of the colonial past of this new nation, it was inspiring to hear the confident voice of one of its youngest members, Mbali Mabuza, reading from the book by her relative, the High Commissioner Her Excellency Dr Lindiwe Mabuza, and proudly introducing us to the natural wonders of her country. As well as pointing out that Tamarind's books were politically correct before we even thought of the term, it was stressed that to turn a child who can read into a reader, that child must be able to feel part of the book. This is exactly why Mbali Mabuza is the focus of the book and why Tamarind seek to construct their texts around young characters with whom their readers can identify. This was a happy, relaxed occasion at which all those present could feel confident that, when it comes to publishers, inspiration is in no way proportional to the size of the organisation. (Bridget Carrington, and see review elsewhere in this issue.)

Booktrust Teenage Prize

Penguin Books, Strand, London, 31 October 2007.

There was a strong shortlist for this award, including books by two authors well known to those who have attended IBBY conferences, Theresa Breslin and Philip Reeve. The winner was Marcus Sedgwick's *My Swordhand is Singing*. A particular feature of this award is the appointment of teenage judges, chosen this year on the basis of a short-story competition on time travel and described by Anthony McGowan, last year's winner of the prize, as 'acute literary critics'.

The Patrick Hardy Lecture

Goodenough College, Mecklenburg Square, London, 31 October 2007.

The title of the lecture was 'The Bigger Picture: Celebrating Our Picture Books', given by the almost omnipresent children's laureate Michael Rosen. His theme was how we can create a 'book-loving culture' within schools, especially given the concerns of parents about how reading is taught. The government uses terms like the 'delivery of the KS1 curriculum' and uses scores for literacy, plus schemes and strategies all of which seem to miss the point about creating new readers. He outlined 18 practical ways that would help to create a book-loving culture within schools. These included: book events, author visits and book clubs. He sees the forthcoming National Year of Reading as an opportunity to promote reading properly. (John Dunne)

P.E.N. debate

The Guardian newsroom, London, 13 November 2007.

'A New Golden Age' was the title of a debate between Michael Rosen (again!), Michael Morpurgo, Jacqueline Wilson and Meg Rosoff. Writing books for teenagers, what it feels like to be the children's laureate, the treatment of sensitive topics and the importance of story in our lives were among the subjects discussed – perhaps the only topic that was scarcely touched on was that suggested by the title of the evening! At the end of the evening, the four participants were asked to name the children's book that had most motivated them to become writers. The answers were *The Wool Pack* (because Michael Rosen as a child wanted to be there), *Treasure Island* (the absence of girls and presence of pirates pleased the young Michael Morpurgo), *The Treasure Seekers* (having to guess who the narrator was gave Jacqueline Wilson the idea that a writer could play games with readers) and *A Wrinkle in Time* (partly because the narrator shares the name Meg with Meg Rosoff). Whatever the motives, it is clear that children's books can be a great inspiration to potential writers.

Eleanor Farjeon Award

Unicorn Theatre, London, 26 November 2007.

The ceremony for this award was held at the attractive venue of the Unicorn Theatre and began with Anne Harvey's reading from Rumer Godden's recollections of Eleanor Farjeon. The shortlist comprised the Polka Children's Theatre; Eileen Armstrong, the current chair of the School Library Association; Seven Stories, which is preserving the rich heritage of children's books; Jo Williams and Marianne Adey, who organise the Federation of Children's Books Red House Award; and the winner, Jane Nissen Books. In her speech presenting the award, Jamila Gavin paid tribute to all those shortlisted, and particularly to the work of Jane Nissen as a custodian who has made the literature of the past accessible to child readers today. Jane Nissen herself paid tribute to all those who had worked with her, especially those who had written the prefaces to the books she publishes.

Children's Poetry Bookshelf competition

Unicorn Theatre, London, 7 December 2007.

Back to the Unicorn Theatre, this time swarming with children aged between 7 and 11, among them the winning and highly commended young poets who wrote on this year's topic, 'dreams'. Before the actual prizes were given by Michael Rosen (have I seen that name before somewhere?!) the children's laureate, Valerie Bloom and Wes Magee, all of whom were among the judges for the award, entertained the young audience with some of their own, very participatory, poems. The 'dreams' in the children's poems ranged from the ghostly and fantastic to the peaceful and spiritual; one poem even declared on behalf of the dreams themselves: 'Whatever you do,/ Whatever you try,/ You will never *really* understand us.'

Nestlé Children's Book Prize

British Library, London, 14 December 2007.

The books for this award were shortlisted by adults, but then school children from all over the country made the final judgement. Three schools were chosen as representatives of all those participating, and children from these were the actual presenters of the certificates to the authors and illustrators concerned. Sean Taylor and Nick Sharratt's *When a Monster is Born* won the 5 years and under category; Chris Riddell's *Ottoline and the Yellow Cat* won in the 6–8 years group and Matt Haig's *Shadow Forest* was the winner of the 9–11 years classification. As ever, categorising for age group isn't easy, and it was interesting to note that Philip Reeve's *Here Lies Arthur* was short-listed both here and for the teenage prize (see the Booktrust Teenage Prize above).

Pat Pinsent

Reviews

Children's Books

The Highwayman's Curse

Nicola Morgan, London, Walker Books, 978-1-4063-0312-4, 2007, 368pp.

Although this book is a sequel to *The Highwayman's Footsteps*, readers who are not familiar with the earlier volume will easily be able to follow the adventures of Will, the narrator, and Bess, as they roam through eighteenth-century Scotland fleeing from the redcoats. Having discovered the corpse of an elderly shepherd, John, and, nearby, his badly wounded great-grandson, Tam, they are at first suspected of the crime by his relatives, a group who supplement their meagre living by smuggling, an activity which does not seem to be against their strong religious beliefs. Once cleared, Bess and Will are induced to assist in the smuggling, while also being drawn into the hatred felt by this community against the powerful Murdoch family, who as well as being the likely murderers are the family's religious and political opponents.

Nicola Morgan's avowed intention in this book is not simply to involve the readers in an exciting story of days gone by, but also to display the poisonous effect that religious antagonism can have in any period of history. To this end she designates the group that Will and Bess have fallen in with as Covenanters and their enemies as Episcopalians. Their religious hostility is heightened by the memory of how, many years before, the mother of Old Maggie, John's widow, had been slowly drowned for her beliefs, witnessed by her seven-year-old daughter, who has consequently been scarred both mentally and physically. Morgan observes what has been termed 'the Killing Times': 'Hatred and anger breed only hatred and anger. In the end someone has to break the circle. Someone has to find a way to forgive.' She leaves us with the hope that this message will ultimately prevail in this small community.

It would be wrong, however, to give the impression that this book merely conveys a powerful and still relevant moral message. There are many moments of excitement, the characters carry the potential for development, and we develop a sense of empathy with this close-knit community eking out an existence in a harsh environment, loyal to their traditions yet possessing the potential to grow to see their enemies as humans like themselves. The author has also tried to give a flavour of the kind of language that they would have spoken, balanced always by the need for intelligibility to readers unfamiliar with Scots. Provided that the two *Highwaymen* books do well, she would like to produce a third volume in the series – it would certainly be good if the lively and attractive couple at the centre of this story were to be given the opportunity for further adventures in a period which although remote has much to say to the twenty-first century.

Pat Pinsent

*Mirrorscape*

Mike Wilks, London: Egmont, pb 978-1-4052-3349-1, £6.99, 2005, 592pp.

Mike Wilks is best known for his picture book *The Ultimate Alphabet* (1986) which has sold three-quarters of a million copies. That outstanding title is a collection of 26 paintings of objects, organised alphabetically. Wilks' realistic artwork is meticulous in its fine detail and yet intriguingly surreal in style, a description that can equally be applied to his writing. Reviewers can be expected to have particularly high expectations of the debut novel of such an acclaimed surrealist illustrator and these high expectation may well have led me to take an overly critical approach.

Mirrorscape is a surreal fantasy set in an imaginary world known as 'The Seven Kingdoms'. It is the first title of a trilogy and is illustrated by the author.



Its central character, 13-year-old Mel (Melkin Womper), is taken from his parents to be apprenticed to a famous artist, Ambrosius Blenk, in the city of Vlam. In the city are three huge palaces, illustrated as frontispieces by the author. In this imagined world, sensory needs such as colour must be purchased from the all-powerful, and corrupt, Five Mysteries. The Fifth Mystery controls the use of colour in the world and Mel is pursued by this powerful force after he accidentally comes into possession of a box containing a magic pigment. Incidental to the story, Wilks provides much fascinating detail about natural pigments. There are resonances of Tolkien both in the descriptive passages and in Wilks' use of significant objects and phrases to link events in the plot. Characterisation is interesting and the main characters are not stereotypes. The reader is kept wondering about the affiliations of certain characters and this technique also serves to keep the plot moving along. Mel befriends Wren, a girl who proves not only to be reliable and resourceful, but also a key figure in the action. However, his friend Ludo develops into a 'Judas' figure, and despite a later reversal, it is his duplicity that moves the plot along.

Important issues are confronted throughout the story. Mel is severely bullied, people are enslaved and compelled to work underground digging for pigments, corruption is rife. All this takes place against a background of fantasy which allows key characters such as Mel, who know the special magic motif, to enter into and travel through paintings and so become part of each 'painted' world. The significance of the book's title then becomes apparent to the reader. 'Mirrorscape' is this world; it is reached via those paintings which carry the magic motif called the 'mirror mark'. In *Mirrorscape* which keeps on growing, time stands still. These motifs keep people out and lock the inhabitants in but, over time, the seals will break down and things within the paintings leak out. In this way Wilks is able to introduce numerous fabulous imaginary monsters into his fantasy, creating sometimes incredibly violent, surreal scenes in which anything is possible. It is during some of these lengthy scenes, as Mel flees from his adversary, the Fifth Mystery, that plausibility in the plot is sometimes lost.

Eventually the corrupt Fifth Mystery is defeated and all slaves are released, the powers of the Five Mysteries are removed. Mel remains unchanged despite his heroism and is portrayed quietly sketching. Effectively he becomes part of the background.

This is a substantial, challenging read, best classified as a crossover novel as it has appeal for confident young readers and adults. The author weaves a complex, skilful fantasy, employing a third-person narrative. Unfortunately, parts of the action are described in such minute detail that the reader is kept at arm's length because so little is left to the imagination. *Mirrorscape* would appear to be a title that readers will either love or hate.

Pam Robson

My Brother Johnny

Francesco D'Adamo, tr. Siân Williams, ed. Cheryl Robson, London, Aurora Metro Press, pb 978-0955156-63-2, £6.99, 2007, 200pp.

In this novel, D'Adamo writes about war and its effect on local populations from a position of personal knowledge, as his parents were refugees from Croatia. We never discover which war he is writing about – it is just referred to as 'Over There' – but this is of no consequence as war is ubiquitously appalling wherever it happens. In many ways, our not knowing the precise location makes it even more devastating, as it emphasises that the inhumanity of war extends across time and place, with a choice of locations ever open to us at any one time.

Lin, the sister of the title character, is almost 14, a rebel in the humdrum life of the village community and fiercely loyal to her brother. She is shattered by the difference she sees in him on his return from the war, and frightened and confused when he sets up an anti-war protest in the central piazza. She defends him against all comers when the community reacts to his action first with mistrust and then with violence.



Her parents, ashamed and antagonistic at the start, eventually accept the reason for his trauma, and Lin begins to understand and to repair what lies behind her own strained relationship with her father.

In addition to its strong anti-war message (powerfully visualised in the final scenes), the themes of unexpected friendship, and enduring loyalty and trust among individuals, lie at the heart of this book. Williams' sensitive translation allows a wider audience to access this powerful modern morality tale.

Bridget Carrington

Ringmaster

Julia Golding, London, Egmont, pb 978 1 4052 3050 6, £6.99, 2007, 327pp.

Darcie Lock is 14 years old and though she doesn't know it, both her parents are spies. Since it is counter to CIA policy for two of its agents to have a child, Darcie should not exist. But when her father goes missing on a mission and her mother is similarly engaged, Darcie must set out to find her father and save the day.

When I began to read this book I must confess that my heart began to sink, since espionage stories are not at all my favourite genre. But as I read on, I found there is more to this book than meets the eye. For *Ringmaster* is a bildungsroman, a story of one girl's struggle to come to terms with the dawning realities of adolescence, and it is set in an appealing Kenyan context. And the story unfolds with a few surprising twists. The evil Ringmaster – who is a female fashion designer – has an innocent niece who is forced against her will to help her aunt's drug-running business. By a neat piece of intertextuality, she links her predicament with a Dickensian heroine. Darcie's spy-master is not a hulking CIA thug but an old lady in high heels. Appearances can mislead.

This is a pacy yarn, an adroit and gripping read, perhaps equally appealing to young readers of both genders.

Rebecca R. Butler

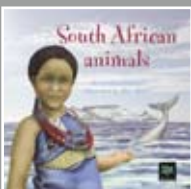
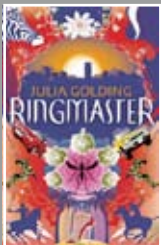
South African Animals

Lindiwe Mabuza, illus. Alan Baker, London, Tamarind, £4.99, 2007, pb 4781870516853, 32pp.

Dr Lindiwe Mabuza is the South African High Commissioner to London, and for this publication took as her inspiration her young Swazi relative, Mbali. Mbali lives in South Africa, and in this spectacularly illustrated rhyming alphabet book, celebrates the diversity of wildlife in the varied habitats of her native country.

As she progresses through the alphabet, the author has contrived rhyming couplets which, in each sentence, describe some aspect of the creatures paired. We learn, for example, that 'Aardvarks feed in the dead of night. Buffaloes roam in the warm sunlight', while 'The extinct quagga is no longer with us. But we are happy to have rhinoceros.' While the text is simple, and easy to read visually, the rhyme assists young readers to remember the order of the letters in the alphabet. The alphabet is further brought to life by the illustrations, which are large, vivid and accurate, infusing the whole book with the atmosphere of the South African landscapes, flora and animals depicted.

Tamarind is probably best known for *Dave and the Tooth Fairy*, a children's book of the year in 1994, which is regularly featured on TV programmes for young readers, and exemplifies the publisher's aim to bring cultures together through their books. In this



one, we can draw much additional information from an apparently simple alphabet. We see Mbali in her tribal costume, but accompanied by a game warden who dresses in Western camouflage and drives a van. We learn some Zulu and Xhosa words (and how useful these languages are for the difficult letters in the alphabet!), and a glossary tells us a great deal more about the animals and the peoples who inhabit the country. We also are made to realise that if we don't protect the animals, they will suffer the same fate as the quagga, which Mbali can see now only in a picture.

This is an altogether delightful book, which can be read at several levels by readers of all ages and from many different cultures.

Bridget Carrington

The Shaman Boy

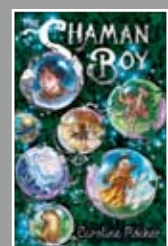
Caroline Pitcher, London: Egmont, pb 978-1-4052-0851-2, £5.99, 2007, 480pp.

Pitcher's protagonist Luka is a blind boy who lives in a bakery with his brother but spends much of his time in an orphanage. Luka discovers that he has an unusual gift: he is capable of shifting shape into many different animal forms. When he is in animal form he can see. In four segments, named after the seasons, the book follows his quest to become a shaman, in a detailed and complex narrative.

The Shaman Boy involves recapitulation from two previous Pitcher novels, *Cloud Cat* and *Sky Shifter*, but is nevertheless accessible to readers unfamiliar with its predecessors. The seasonal segmentation at points seems arbitrary and contrived, but at the end of the book this structure appears justified. Luka starts by using his gift recklessly. Only as the seasons advance does he learn purpose and self-restraint.

In places the narrative pace will flag for the audience of 11–14 year olds presumably intended. But in the end the message is potent and clear. Luka has a talent that stands alongside his disability. To develop that talent, otherwise easily ignored, he needs interaction with the community around him. This is a powerful and relevant metaphor, describing the situation of disabled members of any community. Pitcher stands alongside writers like Lois Keith and Linda Newbery in delivering this telling message to young readers.

Rebecca R. Butler



Critical Texts

Turning the Page: Children's Literature in Performance and the Media

Fiona Collins and Jeremy Ridgman (eds.), Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, pb 3-03910-255-9, 2006, 297pp.

This book is a real treasury of fascinating articles about the various interpretations of well-known children's books in theatre, film, television, CD-ROM and video game. Among the texts featured are *The Jungle Book*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *The Secret Garden*, *Emil and the Detectives*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Harry Potter*, though many others also receive attention. Originally devised in conjunction with the Roehampton MA module on Children's Literature and Performance, the compilation should be of interest to a much wider audience, given that many children are more likely to encounter classic texts through other media than the book.

To single out individual articles is always invidious, but as ever it is impossible to do justice to all of them. I particularly enjoyed Nadia Crandall's exploration of 'The fairy tale in the 21st century' which uses *Shrek* as a case study – even though I haven't seen the animated films and only know the book. Her detailed analysis leads her to the suggestion that 'popular films, particularly fairy-tale adaptations intended for a family audience, are constructed by their viewer to replace some of the functions of the oral narratives that united our ancestral communities ... the cinema experience may be akin to gathering with the entire tribe around a campfire' (p.179) – an aspect that the associated rituals of cinema support.

Kim Reynolds' article, '*His Dark Materials* in performance: finding a balance between heritage and mass media', based on the dramatised version of Pullman's work, is particularly timely in view of the advent of the film of the first of the trilogy. Reynolds pays special attention to the way in which, in the National Theatre's adaptation, 'the children and daemons at the trilogy's centre [are replaced by] adults and puppets' (p.204); this process inevitably means that the 'narrative gaps' of the original text are reduced to the readings imposed by the adapters' interpretations to suit theatrical demands.

Other notable articles in this collection include Fiona Collins' own piece about the different ways in which picture books, including those by John Burningham and Quentin Blake, have been turned into animated films, and Suzanne Greenhalgh's challenging critique of some child-focused adaptations of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Dream*. As can be seen from this selection from it, there is much in this book to interest everyone in the world of children's literature.

Pat Pinsent



Obituary

It is with great sadness that I have to share with you the news that Richard Bamberger died on Sunday 11 November 2007 at his home in Vienna. He was 97.

As one of the founders of IBBY, Richard Bamberger was closely connected to IBBY for over 50 years. Before he answered Jella Lepman's invitation to meet in Zurich to establish IBBY, he had already founded the Austrian Children's Book Club in 1949. Later on in 1965 he established the International Institute for Children's Literature and Reading Research in Vienna, which became the home of the Austrian section of IBBY; he remained its director until 1980. He was elected IBBY's president in 1962 and served until 1966.

During his term as president, IBBY expanded and many permanent links to international organisations including UNESCO were established. In 1963 he and Jella Lepman co-founded IBBY's journal *Bookbird*, and he served as its editor until 1982. He was awarded an honorary membership of IBBY in 1978 during the IBBY congress in Würzburg, Germany, and received the Jella Lepman Medal in 1991.

He was a visionary in children's literature and, when in theory he had retired at the age of 70, he founded the Institute for Educational Media Research in Vienna! In 2003 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Dortmund in Germany for his services to reading promotion.

We have lost a true friend and colleague. It is clear that much of what IBBY has become is due to his foresight, vision, energy and dedication. We owe our founders great thanks.

Patsy Aldana, IBBY president

Events and Conferences

Forbidden Fruit: The Censorship of Literature and Information for Young People

Southport, 25–26 June 2008.

The conference will focus on the censorship of print, electronic and other literary and information resources for young people. Information from sarah.mcnicol@uce.ac.uk, 0121 331 6891.

The Sands of Time: Children's Literature, Culture, Politics and Identity

University of Hertfordshire, 3–4 April 2008.

Key speakers include Michael Rosen, Anne Cassidy, Alan Gibbons, Anthnoy Lishak, Richard McSween and Beverley Naidoo. Information from jj.plastow@herts.ac.uk.

More than Information: Engaging Hearts and Minds through Non-fiction

University of London, Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London, 22 May 2008, 9.00 a.m.–4.00 p.m.

See www.writeaway.org.uk. Information from Nikki Gamble, nikki@writeaway.org.uk.

Marxism and Children's Literature (Third Annual Conference)

University of London, Saturday 21 June 2008.

Further details available soon.

Cultures of Translation: Adaptation in Film and Performance

University of Glamorgan, Cardiff, 26–28 June 2008.

Information from afp2008@hotmail.co.uk.

Twenty-first-century Teenager: Media Representation, Theory and Policy

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

A conference hosted by the Association for Research in Popular Fictions. Information from Nickianne Moody, N.A.Moody@ljm.ac.uk.

NCRCL/IBBY Conference on Children's Literature and the Environment

Froebel College, Roehampton University, Saturday 15 November 2008.

Home, School, Play, Work: The Visual and Textual Worlds of Children

American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, 14–15 November 2008.

Information on the AAS website <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/children.htm> or from Paul J. Erickson, Director of Academic Programs, perickson@mwa.org.

Happy Endings

University of Caen Basse-Normandie, France, 23–24 January 2009.

Information from armelle.parey@unicaen.fr and [Isabelle.roblin @univ-littoral.fr](mailto:Isabelle.roblin@univ-littoral.fr).

An Online Course

The Catherine of Siena Virtual College is a project inaugurated with a view to further the progress in higher education particularly of women from the developing world, but open to all. One of the first courses to be available online is 'Role Perceptions of Women in Children's Literature'. For information about courses and contacts, see www.catherinecollege.net.

The Stephen Spender Prize

This prize for poetry translations has three categories: open, 18 and under, and 14 and under. The prizes are cash and all winning entries are published in a booklet. The last posting date for entries is Friday 23 May 2008. Details and entry forms are at www.stephen-spender.org. To read last year's winning entries, visit the website or email info@stephenspender.org for a free copy of the booklet.