

## Going Graphic: Comics and Graphic Novels for Young People

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## EDITORIAL

‘What is the use of a book,’ thought Alice,  
‘without pictures or conversations?’

Lewis Carroll’s Alice would have approved of the subject of the 2010 IBBY/NCRCL MA conference, ‘Going Graphic: Comics and Graphic Novels for Young People’, as the genre demands that much of the narrative be conveyed through pictures and speech bubbles. The story of the few days preceding the conference would also have needed a few of the other devices common in the medium in order to convey the sense of crisis experienced by the organisers, as first one, then another, of the workshop presenters had to cancel, and then our main speaker, Mel Gibson, had an accident which prevented her from travelling. We were particularly grateful therefore to Paul Gravett, who took over the role of giving the initial keynote speech, and Janet Evans, who gave her workshop talk on Raymond Briggs as a plenary – both at the shortest possible notice. I think everyone who was there will remember the conference as a great success, providing the audience with much to think about concerning a genre which increasingly is making incursions, not only at the level of young readers, into the British market – a market that has in the past been far more dismissive of this type of material than Japan, France and Belgium.

After Paul Gravett’s initial survey of some of the key texts, David Fickling regaled us with the short but unfinished history of the *The DFC (David Fickling Comic)*, which as well as, hopefully, resurrecting, has also given rise to several more publications. Then a panel made up of three creators of graphic novels, Sarah McIntyre, Emma Vieceli and John Harris-Dunning talked about the sources of their inspiration. After the workshop sessions in the afternoon, Janet Evans gave a well-supported and illustrated account of the work of Raymond Briggs, and Marcia Williams brought proceedings to a conclusion by sharing with the audience her solutions to the problems of representing literary classics in strip-cartoon format.

In this issue of *IBBYLink* we are fortunate enough to have material from nearly all the speakers, including those who were prevented by circumstances from being present in the flesh. The book of conference proceedings, to be published by Pied Piper Publishing, is due out in time for the November 2010 conference. I hope your appetite for it will be stimulated by the chance to savour a taste of what they had to say in the articles that follow.

**Pat Pinsent**

# The State of the (Sequential) Art?: Signs of Changing Perceptions of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels in Britain

CONFERENCE  
ARTICLES

Mel Gibson, University of Northumbria, UK

Recent years have seen a change in how comics, graphic novels and manga are understood in Britain. Whilst these changes are not happening in a consistent way across the UK, they represent, I hope, the end of a long period during which sequential art was often misunderstood and, at times, even demonised. Although there have been other occasions since the 1950s when comics have attracted positive interest, this time a more solid consensus about the value of the medium seems to be developing, with a more diverse range of individuals and organisations being involved. This suggests, potentially, a lasting shift in appreciation of the medium, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the form, together with a growing appreciation of the creative potential of sequential art. Whilst this remains partly linked to an understanding of the comic as an educational medium, an appreciation of comics as an art form is growing, often stimulated by the work of Paul Gravett, as the increasing number of exhibitions and mainstream reviews of comics and the screening of programmes like *Comics Britannia* by BBC Four attest.

In addition, it is now becoming more accepted that comics can address any subject, fiction and non-fiction, and any age of audience, not simply the younger reader, and also that the medium has the capacity for creating complex and demanding work. This is reflected in publishers' lists, notably, in the UK, those of Walker Books, predominantly for younger readers, and those of Jonathan Cape, addressing an older readership. Walker's focus on graphic novels for younger readers reflects international trends exemplified by Andi Watson's *Glister* titles (first two published in 2009), Kean Soo's *Jellaby* titles (2008–2009), Hope Larson's work for teenagers and Akira Toriyama's *Cowa!* (2008). In contrast to the growing focus, both nationally and internationally, on creating and publishing stand-alone and series of graphic novels for children in Britain, there are still few regularly published ongoing weekly or monthly titles for children in the UK.

There is now a new air of confidence about celebrating Britain's creative contribution to the medium. This is a recognition of both heritage and new work. Jonathan Cape's occasional series *Cape Graphic Classics* exemplifies this trend, having been launched with Raymond Briggs' *Gentleman Jim* (1980) and Bryan Talbot's *The Tale of One Bad Rat* (1995). Reprints of classic (and not so classic) titles are available from other publishers too, with Rebellion specialising in *2000 AD*-related titles; even *Jackie* collections are available, via Prion Press, showing, perhaps, that nostalgia can play a part here. Recognition of creators is taking other forms as well: Bryan Talbot was awarded an honorary doctorate by Sunderland University this year for his contribution to the creative arts.

There is much work yet to do, however, as the perception of sequential art as second-best, or improper, reading material that addresses only less-able, or unwilling readers, often male, still remains in some quarters. While it is true that some titles may engage emergent readers, reading comics demands multiple literacies and, in offering such a challenge, often attracts very skilled readers. The potential of the form both to support the less-able reader and to challenge the skilled one is becoming recognised.

At the same time, the potential of new technologies for cooperation, collaboration, creativity and community has allowed comics fans and creators to share work, build national and international networks, seek out critical feedback and develop events offering publishing and sales opportunities. This has also happened in less technology-focused ways, for instance through the development of graphic-novel reading groups and via events such as those run by Travelling Man in Newcastle, which has resulted in the publishing of several anthologies. In addition, the growth of an increasingly vibrant festival scene, as shown in the eclectic Thought Bubble sequential art festival, has opened up new spaces for the public to appreciate sequential art, as well as providing

focal points for the various comics communities. There is however sometimes a lack of crossover between such communities: for instance, manga readers may not engage with graphic novels, or vice versa. This has implications for library services etc. in terms of provision.

Amongst the huge range of small-press work appearing, the influence of manga emphasises the cross-cultural aspects of the UK's engagement with sequential art. Manga opened the minds of many younger creators to the potential of comics, since they had not read British, European or American titles. Shojo manga (for girls aged between 10 and 18), for instance, has created a new generation of female readers amongst those largely unfamiliar with the British girls' titles of the past. As is often the case with comics, those who read them often want to make them; the growth in the numbers of women creators reflects this.

Despite the rise of manga, however, there is still a lack of translated material. The wealth of European titles for all ages is not fully appreciated in the UK, although there are firms who are working on translations, often of material suitable for the educational market (especially old favourites like *Lucky Luke*, a Franco-Belgian creation).

Another factor in the changing perceptions of comics in Britain is the rise of comics in the educational sector, as exemplified by SelfMadeHero's Manga Shakespeare series (2007–2009) and the work of Classical Comics in creating graphic-novel adaptations of classical literature (Shakespeare's plays, Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre*, Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* and others). That these titles are being read for pleasure as well as being used alongside other versions of the works shows the capacity of the comic to make challenging ideas and language accessible.<sup>1</sup> This is complemented by my own work in schools, colleges and libraries, working with pupils and professionals in developing leisure-reading collections and considering the utility of comics in the classroom.

In the higher-education sector in Britain, there has also been a shift in perspective, initiated by the work of academics such as Roger Sabin and Martin Barker. Further, there are a growing number of conferences that offer spaces for, or focus on, the medium, and a range of places to publish.<sup>2</sup> I'm currently engaged, for instance, as part of my National Teaching Fellowship, in bringing together those researching and studying comics, so developing interdisciplinary dialogue. Comic creators often work across media, creating synergies around games, films and books. There is, for instance, crossover between comics and picture books; Dave McKean and Neil Gaiman have been influential in creating picture books for older readers.

Today sequential art is seen increasingly positively, many people possessing both a greater awareness of the wealth of material available (including that of British creators) and of comics history. There remain many issues demanding debate – there is much to work on and towards, but there is also much to celebrate.

Dr Mel Comics <http://www.dr-mel-comics.co.uk/> offers links to many of the organisations, individuals and works mentioned above.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mel Gibson (2009) The war of the worlds? Classics, comics and ways of thinking about adaptations. *NATE Classroom*, no. 9, Autumn, pp. 11–13.

<sup>2</sup> [www.dr-mel-comics.co.uk/sources/scholars.html#focused](http://www.dr-mel-comics.co.uk/sources/scholars.html#focused)

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## **From Tintin to Titeuf: Is the Anglophone Market too Tough for French Comics for Children?**

*Paul Gravett, author and lecturer, UK*

The year 2009 marks the eightieth birthday of Hergé's Tintin as well as the 50th anniversary of Asterix (and the fortieth of the first book to be published in the UK).

These icons of Francophone comics, or bandes dessinées, continue to be best-sellers in this country, whereas precious few other such series for children and young people have successfully crossed the English Channel, let alone the Atlantic. In my talk I examined how and why Tintin and Asterix succeeded here, putting them into the context of other attempted exports past and present. I considered such classics as Lucky Luke and Iznogoud by Asterix co-creator and writer René Goscinny, and examined in comparison how Zep, Trondheim, Sfar and others from the latest generation of young creators are faring today with Titeuf, Sardine, Dungeon, Lou, Melusine, The Bellybuttons and other current multi-platform hits in translation. Could one of these become the next Tintin or Asterix?

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## The Short but Continuing Life of *The DFC*

*David Fickling, publisher, UK*

The first thing I want to say is that I am no great comics expert, but rather a failed publisher of a weekly comic, the little ship *The DFC*, a full-colour comic for children, that set off into the gathering storm. More about that in a moment.

The combination of image and text is so intoxicating for the young reader, and is a very important part in learning to read. It also teaches about story patterns, and it taught me how to edit. Additionally comics have inspired many very fine British authors, especially Philip Pullman, who loved the *Eagle* as well as the American *Superman* and *Batman* comics. The love of comics is international.

At the conference, Paul Gravett highlighted a treasure trove of comic-book wonders and artwork produced in France and Belgium over the last hundred years, most of it brand spanking new to the world and all our eyes. So why don't we, unlike France, and unlike Britain in the middle of the twentieth century, have a thriving comic-book industry for children in this country now? Why do we no longer have comics here when almost every other literate culture in the world has a thriving, modern comics industry? It is not because British children don't like them any more, nor because of all the other things they have to do. I think the reasons that we no longer have a comics industry are boringly commercial. The comics publishing companies were gobbled up by larger companies, which were governed by finance – they could make more money elsewhere.

So it was that in June 2008 we started to publish a brand new British comic for children, thirty-six full-colour pages devoted to comics stories, probably the first new weekly comics title for children in thirty years. It featured mainly long-running serial stories with cliffhangers. It ran for forty-three issues and very sadly closed in March 2009. A considerable part of the reason for this was the credit crunch: it was always planned that *The DFC* needed three to five years to get going, and that it could not possibly be profitable immediately, but this delay was not seen as acceptable in the adverse financial climate. This was utterly maddening because it had been working so well. We were bowled over by the sheer quality of UK-based comics art: *The DFC* was in touch with over fifty world-class comics illustrators, who stand comparison with anything in the rest of the world. It was an absolute privilege and a joy to publish them. We also insisted on weekly publication, so that children didn't need to wait too long for the next exciting episode.

And the children really loved it. We still receive letters even though *The DFC* closed months ago. Never in all my thirty-odd years as a story editor have I witnessed a reaction like this from children, who felt that they belonged and could be creative themselves. The readers were desperate to help bring it back.

We are planning to try to bring *The DFC* back in the next couple of years, concentrating more than we did on the marketing: not enough children knew we were there! We need help from everyone in making it better known. Another thing we have done is to publish books from *The DFC* which will form The DFC Library. During 2010, look out for Dave Shelton's *Good Dog, Bad Dog*, Adam Brockbank and Ben Haggarty's *Mezolith*,

Kate Brown's *The Spider Moon*, Robin and Laurence Etherington's *Monkey Nuts*, Sarah McIntyre's *Vern & Lettuce* and Neill Cameron's *Mo-bot High*. So keep your eyes peeled for *The DFC* in flight!!

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## Out of the Box

*Marcia Williams, author and illustrator, UK*

It is my belief that comic strips are a great way to bring books to many young readers. I have yet to find the tale that doesn't adapt itself to the comic-strip form, but I have found that some tales are considerably easier and more obliging than others!

When I started to work on *Mr William Shakespeare's Plays* (1998), I was full of confidence, even though my editor had warned me not to 'mess with the Great Bard!' I had been brought up on Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), and although my book was innovative in its time, I wanted to give it something of the spirit of Shakespeare's plays. I made several false starts, but then, as luck would have it, the new Globe Theatre opened its doors to the public – not for performances, but for guided tours. I was extremely lucky to take a tour with an actor who was a complete buff on Shakespeare and the Elizabethan theatre. Suddenly this whole world came alive for me: the flags, the trumpets, the vendors, the lords and ladies, the prostitutes, the jugglers and the stinkards – all of them jostling and barracking the actors, who might have only just come together for the first time. The whole scene was the performance. Even today, with our formal theatres and well-behaved audiences, actors so often say that it is the audience that makes the performance. How much more that must have been the case in a rowdy, open-air theatre, where some of the audience even sat on the stage.

I came away from this visit knowing that I wanted my book of plays to give a sense of the performance. In order to do this I created the audience as a border around 'the stage', which in this case is formed by the main comic-strip boxes. Once I had worked out the best balance between comic strip and border, I realised that this device had numerous other benefits. It might have been possible to incorporate the audience within the boxes, but by taking the audience 'out of the box' and putting them in the borders they became aligned with the reader. Both were now looking into the boxes as though they were watching a performance on stage. There was no confusion as to who was the 'actor' and who was the 'audience'. The members of the audience also have their own font and colour code to underline this distinction still further. They carry a vast amount of information both about Shakespeare's theatre and England at that time, but never in a didactic way and always in context. All the life, so brilliantly explained by my tour guide, is there. Along the bottom of the page stand the groundlings, unwashed, unkempt, but with much to say for themselves. Amongst them are vendors, pickpockets, jugglers, bears, children and babies. As you move up the audience boxes, the people become richer and grander and you might even find the queen herself amongst the audience, or Shakespeare checking out his players!

The audience also gave me the freedom to let the 'actors' use Shakespeare's own words, as these could now be supported by members of the audience, who, in the context of their own characters, could explain or support the meaning of the words. Nevertheless, the most important part of the book is the play itself and I hope that the audience never take over from the actors. Comic strip is a wonderfully animated genre that is ideally suited to plays and an audience gives it an extra richness.

Another book that moved 'out of the box' was *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (2007) – a series of stories told by pilgrims as they journey to Canterbury. I wanted to do justice both to the stories told by the pilgrims and to the pilgrims themselves. The pilgrims had been so vividly created by Chaucer and each one tells a tale connected, in some way, to his or her own life. So the book starts with the characters travelling to the Tabard Inn in London, where they are to spend a night before setting out on their pilgrimage to Canterbury. They share a meal together and hear the publican, Harry Bailey, suggest that they pass the journey telling tales. The next morning they draw lots to see who will

tell the first tale; the lot falls to the knight, who at this point, moves out of the main comic-strip box. On the next page, the tale has now become the main focus and the pilgrims are processing towards Canterbury along the bottom of the page. They continue in this way until the last tale is told and Canterbury comes into sight. While their tales are being told, the life of the pilgrims is by no means static: we get to know their characters, see some of the difficulties and delights they meet on the journey and share their weariness as the journey nears its end.

Again I found it important that the two layers were easily distinguishable by the reader, and that the supporting cast never jostled for the centre stage. The pilgrims are happiest when some air is left between them and the stories and when the palate is more muted. Down the sides of the pages are narrow borders of birds and animals that the pilgrims might meet on their journey. These are in the form of a medieval tapestry, which helps to place the stories in a period, as well as supporting the text, as the animals comment on the stories and the antics of the pilgrims. These borders work for me, as they seem at first to be mainly decorative and any words appear as part of the scroll effect; in this way they don't take from the other layers. As the book and journey draw to an end and the last tale is told, the pilgrims once again become the main focus of the reader.

It may seem that the many layers on which these books work must be confusing for the child reader, but it is my experience that children are marvellously adept at slipping from pictures, to bubbles, to narrative text, or indeed to whatever part of the whole that takes their fancy. Some children may simply be drawn in by the pictures, others by the text: as in Shakespeare's plays, the audience is the book.

*Archie's War: A Scrapbook of The First World War, by me, Archie Albright (2007)* is a book that moved quite literally out of the box and onto the page. It started as the shoebox collection of First World War memorabilia of a young boy called Archie, and ended up as his scrapbook. Archie is obsessed with comics and tells his story of the war through a mixture of his drawn comic strips, made-up comics characters and favourites from comics of the time. At first glance, with so many stuck-in bits, photographs, pop-ups, letters in envelopes, odd pictures and comments, this book may appear not to be a comic-strip book at all, but I believe it is rooted in the graphic tradition. This tradition, I find, sometimes has to push itself 'out of the box' in order to tell the tale.

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## **Raymond Briggs: Controversially Blurring the Boundaries among Comics, Graphic Novels, Picture Books and Illustrated Books**

*Janet Evans, Liverpool Hope University, UK*

This plenary talk focused on the work of Raymond Briggs, who in November 2008 won the Lifetime Achievement Award at the COMICA Cartoon Art Trust Awards. Since starting his career as an author/illustrator over four decades ago, Briggs has been controversially and subversively blurring the boundaries of picture-book production for readers of all ages. His books, generally regarded by many as being for young children, are often in fact complex graphic novels with challenging, underlying messages. Questions preliminary to the analysis of Briggs' work are: What, if any, are the essential differences between comics and graphic novels? How far do such differences matter? What dictates the style/audience/subject matter?

Sadly, for a long time, comics and graphic novels have not been taken seriously as an art form and prior to receiving his Lifetime Achievement Award, Briggs frequently verbalised his frustration about the way cartoon strips and graphic novels were treated. He felt that the adult cartoon was denied the dignity of an accepted form and blamed the content of comics and cartoons as the reason for this. In 2001 he suggested the existence of a 'hierarchy of snobbery in the arts', with opera at the top and 'right at the bottom ... the strip cartoon, a medium for children and the simple minded'. He was not alone in feeling that comics and graphic novels were underrated; Will Eisner, a legendary

cartoonist, and another expert, Scott McCloud, have expressed similar opinions. Things are now changing, not least because of the huge amount of creative talent and expertise in the field. Comics and graphic novels are now much more widely accepted and an increasing number of artists and writers are creating sequential art that is more worthy of scholarly discussion.

Certain cultures have always celebrated this form of illustrated text: Tintin and Asterix, from French-speaking sources, stand out as characters, while Japan's manga texts are widely read. Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1980–1991), about the survival of the author's father in the Holocaust, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1992. Bryan Talbot's *The Tale of One Bad Rat* (1994) deals with child abuse, making links with the life of Beatrix Potter and the English Lake District. Most relevantly here, Raymond Briggs's *Ethel and Ernest* (1998) is a biography of his parents before, during and after the war years.

Some graphic novels are 'fusion' texts that combine elements of picture books, comics and graphic novels to create a genre that is a synthesis of aspects from all these genres whilst still dealing with very serious issues, examples including Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), which won the Caldecott Medal in 2008; Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2006), a wordless picture book and graphic novel that combines dealing with the plight of asylum seekers and refugees; and David Almond's *The Savage* (2008), part novel, part graphic novel, which deals with bereavement and bullying.

Briggs is a hugely successful author/illustrator and creator of graphic novels and has been awarded numerous awards for his work. Nevertheless he hankers after the luxury of 'doing only the words'. Many of his world-famous books have social, political and moral overtones, and they frequently deal with death, dying, tragedy and the futility of life. In an interview in 2004, Briggs explained that endings to books are inherently sad because death is the real ending. His books also engage the reader in issues related to war and conflict, notably in *When the Wind Blows* (1982) and *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* (1984), but also present in *Gentleman Jim* (1980) and *Ethel and Ernest* (1998). Even *Fungus the Bogeyman* (1977), a very philosophical book dealing with existential elements relating to life itself, has illustrations that look like air-raid shelters from the First World War. Over a 40-year period, Briggs has been continuously courting controversy and blurring the boundaries within the different examples of visual texts. His graphic novels have, at times subversively, shown the futility of life; they have also extended our horizons and made us think more profoundly about the meaning of life.

At the end of the talk, a glance at the illustrations from one of Briggs' best loved and probably most famous books, *The Snowman* (1978), revealed how this wordless picture book/graphic novel from thirty years ago still carries the tremendous power to move us by sheer simplicity. What a great master of this genre Raymond Briggs is – a true genius in his time!

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## **Graphic Novels in the High-School Classroom**

***Bill Boerman-Cornell, Trinity College, Palos Heights, IL, USA***

This textual analysis considers ways in which graphic novels might cross over from the high-school library to the history classroom. A recent shift in teaching history encourages students to look critically at how our understanding of past events is formulated. This means looking carefully at the source of the information, the audience of that document at the time it was written, the perspective of the author, and the historical context in which it was written. Graphic novels can help students begin to ask these questions. The analysis described contrasted earlier, text-only versions with George O'Connor's *Journey into Mohawk Country* (an adaptation of a primary source), Sid Jacobson's adaptation of *The 9–11 Report* (an adaptation of a secondary source), and Howard Zinn's *A People's History of American Empire* (a rhetorically constructed argument using primary sources). Results reveal how graphic novels often highlight

critical questions in texts through a contrast between meanings in the verbal text and the images. Results also reveal some cause for caution: students must consider the perspective and purpose of the adapter as well as the original author, while adaptations often leave out material not suited for visual depiction. History graphic novels offer teachers an effective way to teach students to read history texts, both primary and secondary, from a more critical perspective.

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## **Britain's Comics Explosion**

*Sarah McIntyre, author and illustrator, UK*

Right now comics are the most exciting thing happening in publishing. Children are jumping in with an enthusiasm that is amazing their parents, teachers and librarians. Kids who never liked to read before are suddenly reading, and then writing and drawing and sometimes even publishing their own stories, since comics feel like fun, not work! Oxford-based publisher David Fickling gave me my first break into published comics by commissioning a weekly strip for his comics magazine, *The DFC*. 'Vern and Lettuce' featured a sheep and a rabbit who live in a tower block in Pickle Rye, a place very much like my own neighbourhood in south London. The comic is no longer coming through subscribers' letterboxes, but in its place I'm preparing *Vern and Lettuce* to come out in book form, as part of The DFC Library series. I am hoping these books will get more UK publishers and bookshops excited about comics and will help the UK catch up with the huge comics industries in France, Japan and the USA.

At the same time as I was making the comics, David Fickling invited me to illustrate a picture book written by Giles Andreae called *Morris the Mankiest Monster* (2009). I took this book to comics fairs and I saw the exciting things happening there. I was impressed by the range of the visitors' ages, from toddlers to pensioners; in particular, the large number of fathers bringing their children to the comics fairs, and introducing their children to the comics they had loved since they were young. There were few comics for children under eight, but they snatched up anything remotely accessible to their reading level and gravitated toward the hands-on 'Make your own Monster' workshop at my table. Kids and parents were looking for stories, and *Morris* sold like hot cakes.

I was also excited to see pre-teens and teenagers proudly showing off the comics they had made themselves, most notably an anthology, organised by Hunt Emerson and John McCrea, of comics made by kids based in Telford, and a three-country anthology based on an exchange with young comics creators in Spain and Bulgaria. Recent developments in online printing services have made the option of printing anthologies easy and affordable.

Dressing up and comics go together, and kids love dressing up; another exciting factor in comics has been its sheer costume pageantry. For a twice-yearly event, London's ExCeL centre was mobbed by over 30,000 teenagers, almost all wearing the full 'cosplay' outfits of their favourite comics and animation heroes. Book sales boomed, and copies of Manga Shakespeares were snatched up as quickly as the latest Japanese teen romance comics. The atmosphere felt remarkably friendly and upbeat, since all the teenagers had put a lot of thought into hand-making their costumes and were excited to see each other and to be seen. Independent creators have had a strong and growing presence at the festival, thanks largely to the efforts of the organiser (a fellow *DFC* contributor) Emma Vieceli. These comics creators often self-publish, thus inspiring other budding storytellers.

In workshops, I have experimented with different ways to get stories moving, and found that even children who didn't speak English would happily create wordless comics to show to the group. The children told a wide range of stories in comics form, including superhero capers, a humorous school-trip disaster story, and a fairy tale that thinly veiled one girl's heart-wrenching experience of her parents' divorce and immigration.

I also enjoy getting kids involved in a Comics Jam, similar to a musicians' jam session. As an example of a Comics Jam, David O'Connell and I produced a twenty-four-page comic by creating alternate pages day by day, with the theme of 'airship'. At the end, we printed out our comic, stapled it together and sold it from our table at comics fairs. We were so proud of it that we did another jam and presented it to David Fickling, who immediately gave us a book contract and is working with us to shape our quick, improvisational comic into a picture book. We have now taken the idea of the Comics Jam to workshops with children, adapting it so that the children spend ten minutes or so on character design, then have five minutes to create the first panel of their stories, and then pass their papers on to their neighbours to pick up the next part of the story. The children hugely enjoy the playfulness of the activity, and seeing how other people draw and develop the characters they came up with.

I hope that British publishers will catch on to children's enthusiasm, and value top comics creators as much (or even more) than creators of other kinds of literature, since creating excellent comics stories of any great length takes huge amounts of time and skill. I look forward to seeing comics fairs full of young creators swapping and selling their handmade books and comics and exploring and pushing comics boundaries in this amazing medium of words and pictures.

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## **Reading between the Lines: The Subversion of Authority in Comics and Graphic Novels Written for Young Adults**

*Ariel Kahn, Roehampton University and Met Film School, Ealing Studios, UK*

There is extensive critical discussion of the relationship between image and text in picture books and comics, but little has been written of the overlap between the two. A recent resurgence in the publication of comics and graphic narratives specifically aimed at young adults raises a range of issues about the nature of authority, and the role of the reader in negotiating the narrative and constructing meaning in and through the interplay of image and text. Focusing on key examples from Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007) to Mariko and Jillian Tamaki's *Skim* (2008), this presentation explored the diverse relationships between image and text in these works, and the implications of the enhanced role they create for the reader.

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## **Richard Felton Outcault and *The Yellow Kid***

*Dora Oronti, author, illustrator and publisher, Cyprus*

Comics and graphic novels started long ago: their forerunners are to be found in cave paintings, while their other antecedents include Egyptian hieroglyphics, Greek friezes, Roman carvings and medieval tapestries. Later, cartoonists and caricaturists started using scenes from daily life, with an emphasis on political and social satire, but the entertainment value began to predominate, and in the late nineteenth century, a creation of Richard Felton Outcault, the Yellow Kid, became so popular that the sales of the newspaper in which the comic strip appeared increased. The Kid's nightshirt changed its colour several times, before the final yellow colour, starting with black and white, then blue, then red with black polka dots and then changing again into yellow, thus providing the cartoonist's title. In 1896, one week after Outcault's first cartoon was published, he combined sequential drawings and speech balloons for the first time, thus increasing the potential for more effective development and storytelling in comics. Newspaper readers probably chuckled and turned the page, unaware of the historic importance of his cartoon.

Outcault was born in Lancaster, Ohio, on January 1863. His father, Jess, encouraged his son's artistic interests. After studying at McMicken College, he found employment painting scenes on strongboxes for the Lock Company. In 1888 he was hired by Edison

Laboratories to provide illustrations of the display for *Electrical World* magazine. In 1889 he travelled to France and studied art in the Latin Quarter and in 1890 he returned to New York and started selling cartoons to magazines. He spoke later about the inspiration for the Yellow Kid in a friendly street child he often encountered.

Although Outcault was adept at rendering comedic action in his drawings, his style was more typical of the realistic illustrations found in the nineteenth-century humorous magazines than the pioneering newspaper comics sections in the first decade of the twentieth century. The success of the Yellow Kid brought Outcault fame and wealth, and he continued creating new characters, such as Buster Brown. He died in New York in 1928, leaving a legacy of cartoons that still lives, and provides inspiration to many young people.

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## As Old as Clay

*Daniel Moreira de Sousa Pinna, Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF),  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

During an archaeological expedition at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, a small earthen goblet was dug out at Burnt City (*Shahr-e Sukhta*), an Iranian archaeological site 57 kilometres from Zabol. Encircling the piece are five slightly different images, representing a goat jumping to get leaves from the highest branch of a tree. The piece has a diameter of 8 centimetres and is 10 centimetres tall; it was made about 5200 years ago. The paintings around the grail were repeated intentionally, with slight modifications between each image and the one that follows it, as a means of telling the story of the animal's action. The painter used the cylindrical form of the vessel so that the last image maintains a sequential relationship with the first one, creating a continuous cycle, with no beginning or end. Local press and Iranian Cultural Heritage authorities called this ceramic grail *the world's oldest animation*.

Produced with the financial support of Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO), a documentary short movie *The Tree of Life* was released in 2008, telling the story of the relic and raising two large areas of controversy. The first is about the narrative figured in the paintings. CHTHO states that they represent graphically the story of the Tree of Life – an Assyrian myth about the origin of the world. The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies (Cais), on the other hand, rejects this hypothesis, since the ceramic was crafted about a 1000 years before the appearance of the oldest known record of the myth. To these researchers, the images simply represent a savage goat: an animal commonly seen near the archaeological site. Despite that, there is a remarkable resemblance between the graphics and the ancient Assyrian tale.

The second controversy about the vessel is related to the media's persistence in calling it 'the world's oldest animation', encouraged mainly by the CHTHO and the Iranian Asifa (Association International du Film d'Animation). In fact, the paintings around the grail do characterise sequential art, but that does not necessarily imply that this relic is the first attempt at character animation, or that the artist's intention was to tell graphically a story with movement representation.

To start looking for answers to these questions, this paper offers a study of the meaning of sequential art and the basic characteristics and requisites that can be identified in graphic storytelling. It presents the main varieties of sequential arts (comics, animation and movies), their resemblances and differences, the aspects that should be considered when creating a visual narrative and how the story is decoded by the reader/spectator. The research is based on the studies of artists and scholars such as graphic artist Will Eisner (sequential arts, comics), Scott McCloud (comics), film-maker Norman McLaren and Professor Paul Wells (animation, cinema).

This paper was originally planned as an introductory article to the first edition of *Interstícios (Interstices)* magazine; an academic Brazilian journal about sequential arts released on 28 October 2009, during the celebrations of Asifa's International Animation

Day in Rio de Janeiro. This brief article is an invitation to the reader to reflect on the sequential arts, visual literacy, comics, movies and the world's oldest animation.

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## **The Power of Hybrids: Complex and Effective Visual Narratives that Resist Categorisation**

*Petros Panaou, University of Nicosia, Cyprus, and Frixos Michaelides, author and illustrator, Cyprus*

Comic books, graphic novels, picture books, wordless picture books, illustrated books and novels, as distinct genres abide to specific conventions. Word–image interaction in each genre is also guided by conventions and can vary only within a preset range. These identifiable conventions assist the interpretation of stories; the reader knows what to expect and how to receive it. We assert, however, that the postmodern era has brought the publication of works that break conventions, resist categorisation, subvert reading expectations, and yet are highly successful in communicating powerful and engaging stories.

Shaun Tan's *Tales from Outer Suburbia* (2008), Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007) and David Almond's *The Savage* (2008), for example, are such works. We have analysed these books – each from his own perspective – pondering on the manner in which their narratives are constructed through a powerful fusion of generic conventions, a combination that prompts the reader to stay constantly alert, assessing the nature of word–image interaction on each page, and switching from one mode of interpretation to another. While these 'hybrids' certainly do imply an experienced reader – one who is familiar with the conventions of each of the aforementioned genres – they also imply a reader who, being a child of the postmodern era, accepts and celebrates flexibility, fluidity and transmutation.

Of particular interest are the avant-garde techniques that are employed to achieve this effect. Stephen Weiner in *The 101 Best Graphic Novels* (2001) defines the graphic novel as 'a story told in comics-book format with a beginning, middle, and end'. Weiner dates the use of the term 'graphic novel' to the publication of *A Contract with God: And Other Tenement Stories* by Will Eisner in 1978. Eisner himself in his seminal work *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985) implies that the graphic novel is inherently avant-garde, since it breaks from a tradition of comics being 'confined to short narrations or depictions of episodes of brief but intense duration' (p.141). This is why the first attempts of publishing and promoting graphic novels ran 'headlong into an unprepared audience, not to mention an ill-equipped distribution system' that followed 'the patterns of yesterday' (p.141). In an effort to provide the genre with higher status, Eisner intentionally marketed his graphic novel *A Contract with God* to adult audiences and had it sold in bookstores rather than in drugstores and comic-book specialty shops.

The graphic novel's status has of course changed dramatically since 1978. The fact that this conference has been devoted to comics and graphic novels attests to this change. But status is not the only thing that has been changing during the past few years. Eisner had also pointed to the following certain limitations of the graphic novel.

- 1 In being specific, the images obviate alternative interpretations.
- 2 Converting a textual passage into a visual image in the mind permits a more participatory involvement on the part of the reader.
- 3 Within comic-book art, there is little time and space to deal with abstract ideas or emotions, such as 'the surge of pain or the glow of love or the turmoil of inner conflicts' (p.140).

Writing in 1985, Eisner concludes his discussion of the medium's limitations and challenges as follows.

Yet it is precisely in these areas where the opportunity for expansion of the

application of comic book art lies. This is the prime and continuous confrontation which the comic book cartoonist must address. There are only two ways to deal with it: to try, and risk failure, or not to do it at all – that is, to avoid any subject not easily expressed by the present state of the art or its existing clichés. (p.140)

It seems that ever since, several artists have taken the first option, risking failure but producing extraordinary visual stories. And of course, they have achieved this by breaking away from the present state of the art and its existing clichés.

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## **Crossing a Graphic Text with Classics of Children's Literature: Disney Manga *Kingdom Hearts***

*Stefania Tondo, Suor Orsola Benincasa University, Naples, Italy*

The continuing development of graphic texts for children and young readers has facilitated exploration in teaching and reading literature. Within the vast field of the visual world, there are invaluable teaching tools and materials for new methodologies. Teachers need to integrate these with traditional literacy, and to teach a variety of literary and media devices, being aware that visual media appeal to emotions and provide engagement, as suggested by Gibson (1999). In my courses in English for Communication Studies and for Lifelong Education I work with the students on critical texts related to literary communication and education, and to art and media, and focus on graphic novels and manga as 'forms of "literature", taking the word in its wider sense' (Pinsent, 1999: vii). Students acquire a more critical view of media entertainment, and feel the necessity for a valid method of learning and knowing in the media-rich world, 'establishing a tension between what can be done with the form and perceptions of how it can be used' (Gibson, 1999: 100–1). In other words, literary education and communication require that we all rethink the traditional practices and take notice of what is changing in literature teaching methodologies, and blend texts, media, graphics, animation, video, sound and hypertext links (Rosenblatt, 1978). The combination of print, visual imagery and multimedia in graphic texts delineates a rich area for the exploration of literary communication for children and young people.

This is true in the case of the left-to-right-reading-orientated manga *Kingdom Hearts* 1–4 (Tokyopop, 2005–2006), a cross-pollination enterprise fusing Disney and manga into an integrated whole without loss of identity. Fictional crossover and multimedia interaction operate at various levels. As a translation of a video game into manga, the series is Shiro Amano's comic adaptation of *Kingdom Hearts* action role-playing game, produced by SquareEnix and Disney Interactive Studios (2002) and itself blending Disney and the video game *Final Fantasy* (SquareSoft, 1990). Inter-company crossover makes both the video-game source and the target manga mingle Disney, *Final Fantasy* and the new characters Donald, Goofy, Alice, Tinkerbell, the Moogles, Sora, Kairi, Riku and others, including the inhabitants of the worldwide *Kingdom Hearts* merchandise – toys, video games, trading cards, manga and novel versions, clothing items, and so on.

The storyline of *Kingdom Hearts* moves between more than one fictional world: Wonderland, Neverland and others shape the territory of a struggle between good and evil, of an epic journey of courage against the menacing forces of the Heartless people in order to restore and defend a world with hearts. Finally, harmony triumphs and, symbolically, manga Sora enters the world of an old printed Western book, *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Pooh greets Sora and assures him that it is always possible to enter the world of the book and find beloved friends.

Far from replacing traditional texts, crossover manga represents inter-cultural encounter and introduces both Western and Japanese young readers to literature they might never otherwise meet, linking new and old forms of literary communication, for life-long readers on both sides of the Pacific Ocean and across the world.

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## **‘Remember Me’: An Afrocentric Reading of *Pitch Black***

*Kimberley Black, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA*

*Pitch Black: Don't Be Skerd* (2008) is a graphic novel resulting from a collaborative art project between Youme Landsdowne, a community muralist/artist/activist, and Anthony Horton, who is also an artist/activist. *Pitch Black* explores biographical elements of Horton's life, some of which was spent living in the subway tunnels beneath New York City. He was abandoned by his birth parents, lost his foster parents and suffered the complete failure of social-service agencies. He made a life for himself underground in the tunnels, and though lacking opportunities for formal education, nevertheless developed under the tutelage of others who shared his experience of homelessness. Despite the suffering and uncertainty of his environment, Horton saw beauty in his world, expressed this beauty in art, and shared it with Landsdowne.

*Pitch Black* advances an ‘Afrocentric’ ethos through its textual and visual narrative. Afrocentricity is a set of social theories that have the interests of people with African ancestry as its central concern. It speaks to the specific histories, cultures and past and present conditions of people of African ancestry living in the contemporary world. Aside from promoting social theory, Afrocentricity can also provide a set of aesthetic judgements that can be applied to expressive forms.

In *Pitch Black*, the Afrocentric view is enacted through the presence of two ‘mythofoms’, a concept proposed by Afrocentric theorist Molefi Asante. An important function of myth in contemporary African-American discourse is ‘the demonstration of control over circumstances, as opposed to the control over nature’ (Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, 1998: 100). Traditionally, these mythofoms have been expressed and circulated through various oral forms, including poems, songs, ballads, oratory, rhymes, stories and humour. The mythofoms themselves are ideas, wisdom and practical strategies for survival that are frequently encoded and enacted through personification, and transmitted through story.

Two mythofoms are dominant in *Pitch Black*, being evoked in the exploits of the folk heroes ‘Stagolee’ and ‘Shine’. Stagolee is based on an historical person whose story appears in a series of popular blues ballads based on a series of events that occurred in the ‘red light’ district of St. Louis, Missouri in 1895. The Stagolee mythofom represents the idea of social protest, lawless dissent and active resistance to oppression. There are many variations of these ballads; in many of them, Stagolee goes to Hell, takes the pitchfork from Satan, and becomes the ruler of Hell himself. This concept of Stagolee as the ruler of chaos and the underworld is evident in *Pitch Black*. In the narrative, after being harassed by law enforcement for sleeping on the streets, Horton makes the deliberate decision to live beneath the city in the subway tunnels ‘six stories [storeys] below the city’. This message is presented in a visceral and striking way in a two-page spread oriented vertically that depicts the six levels below the ground, each level criss-crossed by stairways in the darkness, marking the descent.

The second mythofom present in *Pitch Black* is ‘Shine’, which, according to Asante, represents the idea of hope coming through self-discovery in the midst of chaos. Hope is seen as a process that starts with a self-awareness that can happen only in times of

extreme trouble. Ballads tell the mythical story of an African-American aboard the Titanic during its fateful voyage. According to these ballads, Shine discovers the tragedy early, but instead of despairing, remembers his innate capabilities and swims to safety.

The central importance of self-awareness in the midst of chaos is presented in a powerful manner through the storyline and in an image in *Pitch Black*. Earlier in the story, Horton recounts the many tragedies in his personal life, including the scary retreat to life in the bowels of the city. His story begins with sadness and continues with abject hopelessness until the point of self-discovery that he makes while underground. He goes through a period of soul-searching there which is the turning point in Horton's tale and in the graphic novel. This moment of recognition and self-awareness is presented visually. Horton sits alone in the dark of the tunnel with his back to the reader; his face is reflected in a broken shard of mirror that he holds up facing the reader. He looks at this reflected image and thus begins his art: he draws a picture of himself from the reflection. The text simply reads, 'Know thyself'. This knowledge of self is the beginning of hope in the story and is the Afrocentric message for the reader of this work.

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## **Graphic Novels and the Holocaust**

*Rebecca R. Butler, reviewer and researcher, UK*

In this paper, I examine two texts, Irene N. Watts' *Goodbye Marianne* (2008), illustrated by Kathryn E. Shoemaker, and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1996), in the light of Wolfgang Iser's contention that reading a story is a process with roots both in the text and in the life experience and cognitive history of the reader. The transaction between the two, and the gaps in the text for the reader to occupy within the joint creative process, are vital in the interpretation of each text. What the text *doesn't* say is every bit as important as what it does. I will therefore speculate about the discontinuities in these texts that might stimulate the imagination of a child reader.

*Goodbye Marianne* is set in Berlin in 1938. We are taken into a pleasant domestic scene shared by a mother and daughter. Their clothes, their looks, their hair all reveal them to be a closeknit couple, but the father seems to be absent. The synagogues have been burned, Jewish shops forced to close, Jewish children expelled from Aryan schools. Marianne is learning that in this society being Jewish is a crime. Now she and her mother are to lose their home. We learn that Marianne's father, a bookseller, is in hiding, guilty of owning forbidden books. She and her mother plan to flee to grandparents in Dusseldorf. An agonising choice arises. Some Jewish children are to be allowed to escape on-board ships – the famous *kindertransport* – to England. By chance Marianne is offered a place. Will she leave her parents?

*Maus*, a crossover book between children's and adult literature, with a deliberately harsh graphic style, plunges us into the horror of Auschwitz in January 1945. The Russian army is approaching and the camp occupants have no idea what fate awaits them. There is a plan, the prisoners believe, to transport them all from Poland to Germany. Seven prisoners plan to hide in a disused room when the evacuation begins, and trust in the advancing Soviets to rescue them. The seven watch from the safety of their attic as the prisoners are herded out. But suddenly their plan is ruined. It seems that the buildings of Auschwitz are to be bombed and burned when the prisoners have departed. If they stay, they die. They abandon their plan and join the fleeing horde of prisoners, heading off into the snow-covered wastes.

The subject matter of these books implies an abiding danger in these situations. Many texts, graphic or not, are introduced to young readers by a mediating adult – a teacher, parent, elder sibling or friend. It is relatively easy for the mediating adult to make suggestions which, well meant, cloud the reader response. Making my suggestions about these texts, I am only speculating about what might be in the minds of young readers, not suggesting what should be planted there. These two graphic stories display Iserian discontinuities. Even while Marianne and her mother are seated contentedly at the table,

the edge of an unidentified paper intrudes from the bottom edge of the frame. Something sinister is about to force its way into the scene. What can it be? Has Vati been arrested? Has some other Jewish building been destroyed, like the synagogues? It might of course be good news: have classes begun for the Jewish children ejected from the state system? Young readers will formulate their views on these questions. The orphanage rings to tell Mrs Kohn that there is a vacancy on the *kindertransport* which Marianne can fill. It's a miracle! It's a heaven-sent opportunity for her daughter to escape the concentration camp. The mediating adult knows it's probably a reprieve from the gas chamber. To Marianne it's a separation from her mother for which she is totally unprepared. How will young readers interpret this event?

The most obvious and most significant Iserian discontinuity in Marianne's story comes at the close. How will her life in England be shaped? Will she ever again see her parents and grandparents, possibly in a happy reunion in Britain? Will she be integrated into the Jewish community in England? Will she ever return to post-war Germany?

The main Iserian discontinuity in *Maus*, a massive and overpowering lacuna for readers young and old, is that the victims are portrayed as mice, their captors as cats. The hostility between the Nazi masters and their Jewish victims is conceptualised as one genetically programmed as between predator and prey. Cats cannot be taught that mice have a right to life. Is the same true of the Nazis and the Jews? This brutal lesson from nature red in tooth and claw can hardly fail to trigger questions in young minds.

Are the Iserian discontinuities in these two graphic books conveyed in ways that are distinct from the textual? The ambience of the Kohn home, a protective shield around Marianne, is visually depicted in ways that text might make too explicit. The physical proximity of mother and daughter, soon to be disrupted, perhaps for ever, is visually emphasised. In the case of *Maus*, if its messages were contained only in text, an adult would need to explain a good deal about Nazi history. Most children have an understanding of the predator/prey role in nature. Spiegelman's discontinuity is there for young readers to see.

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## **Copulating, Coming Out and Comics: The High School Comic Chronicles of Ariel Schrag**

*Erica Gillingham, Research Student, Roehampton University, UK*

The High School Comic Chronicles of Ariel Schrag cover the lesbian comic-book artist's life over her four years of high school: *Awkward* (1995), *Definition* (1996), *Potential* (1997) and *Likewise* (1998). I will argue that for the implied teenage audience of these comics, it is more important to figure out what parts go where, what an orgasm is and how to come out *to themselves* rather than hear about academic arguments for or against definitions of sex and sexuality.

The High School Chronicles were written *by* a teenager about her experiences *as* a teenager and *for* other teenagers to read. From the ages of 14 to 18, Schrag kept notes and files, posed herself, her friends and her lovers in photographs for anatomically correct drawings, and discussed her theories about comics within her comic. Schrag knew she was writing in the autobiographical genre of comics and worked diligently to see that vision realised and conveyed – unflinchingly, and with brutal honesty – through her chosen medium the graphic memoir. Graphic in form, The High School Chronicles are also appropriately graphic in content. Schrag understands her audience and yet works to speak to the common suffering of teenagers. Their hormones and emotions are translated into strikingly realistic, visceral images, often notable for their shock value. They remind the reader that the author is a teenager writing for herself and other teens: penises, vaginas, fluids and masturbation are part of their world.

In Schrag's case, this teenage suffering combines with her struggle with how to document it. Her life appears consumed with documentation – designing, producing and creating 'the comic', as Schrag often refers to it. Her strict use of black-and-white

images compounds her attention to how to tell the ‘story of her truth’, offering a veracity to her version of the events. Readers are witness to taped conversations, diary entries and inner monologues, as she constantly wrestles with how to capture and portray the events in her life, her relationship with her sexuality and her myriad sexual experiences. This inner turmoil is often with regard to the creation process of her art, but also claims a large space in her frustration with her most immediate, intimate relationships.

One of the strongest redeeming qualities of Schrag’s work is her depiction of her coming out process over her four years of high school. Schrag sums up the early stages of this process, as much for herself as for her reader, in the opening four pages of her second memoir, *Definition*. Placing herself in the context of the school yard and halls, Schrag depicts being called out as a dyke by a lesbian classmate, and then denying it. On the following two pages she considers her attraction to women, acknowledges her love for boys as well, feels stuck with the label ‘Bi’, which she doesn’t like, and drops the discussion all together in exchange for the stress and pressure of her chemistry class – all in sixteen frames! Over the course of the next two memoirs, *Potential* and *Likewise*, the reader observes as Schrag continues to negotiate her coming-out process and her sexuality. These questions are inherently coupled with copulating – with men, with women, in fantasy and with herself. I have specifically chosen the word ‘copulating’ here because Schrag herself is in constant negotiation throughout the memoirs about what counts as sex. As depicted, Schrag searches for some biological example in her studies, coming back again and again to books such as Dean H. Hamer and Peter Copeland’s *The Science of Desire* (1996) and S. Levay’s *Queer Science* (1997).

This connection with the audience is, I believe, what Jared Gardner is writing about when he writes of ‘[allowing] our own pain to bleed into the other, and more urgently, the pain of the other to bleed into ourselves’ (2008: 23). Schrag, arguably, makes it through high school and her teenager years by ‘bleeding’ her own pain and struggle onto the page, where in turn her teenage audience shares in that pain and struggle, knowing they are not alone.

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## **Is Henty’s History Lost in Graphic Translation? *Won by the Sword* in 45 pages**

*Rachel Johnson, Research Librarian, University of Worcester, UK*

One of the two main motivators for G.A. Henty’s prolific production of historical adventure stories was to teach history. His strong storylines were, and, according to the reprinters of his work, still are, recognised as a significant factor in his appeal to readers of all ages and to his success as a novelist.

The hero’s varied achievements, embedded into an historical event, involve him in a number of dangerous adventures in which his strength and ingenuity are tested; as a result of this he is recognised by the foremost leaders of the day as a valuable asset. The strong linearity of the plot, together with the presence and activity of the hero, lends itself to revision into a graphic format. My aim therefore is to examine whether this revision has been at the cost of abandoning the historical content of Henty’s writing in

order to produce a swashbuckling yarn or whether some historical content has been included without the pace of the story being adversely affected.

The Classics Illustrated version of *Won by the Sword* was published in English by Gilberton Company (New York, 1959). Its purpose, according to Henty's Preface, is 'to continue the history of the Thirty Years' War in Europe with France taking the place of Sweden as the main player' (1959: vi). General Turenne provides the military focus for the boy hero Hector Campbell, the orphaned son of a Scottish officer. Hector's encounter with Turenne is his entry point into a life of soldierly adventure. The graphic version follows the plot of the original very closely: the 'cuts' are applied to the historical detail given by Henty to provide an in-depth historical context. The narrative is focalised through Hector, whose distinguished adventures are foregrounded throughout. The last section of the story concentrates on Hector's capture and escape and his flight to England after an enemy's violent but unsuccessful attempt on his life. Once across the channel, Hector purchases an estate with the gifts received for services rendered. The last two frames in the graphic version of the novel inform the reader that the Thirty Years' War has ended, giving the date.

From the title page onwards, the text in the graphic version of *Won by the Sword* summarises the historical context just enough to give the reader an understanding of the framework within which the adventures are embedded. Throughout the text (and I include illustrations and words in the term 'text'), the historical context is minimal, informing the reader which battle is being fought, by whom and in what location. From this information the reader learns that the Thirty Years' War began in 1618; was fought predominantly in France and Germany; that the two major French generals were Turenne and Condé; that La Rochelle, Turin and Rocoi saw major action; and that the war ended in 1648.

Since the Classics Illustrated series was designed to be educative, there is a note after the final illustration: 'Now that you have read the Classics Illustrated edition, don't miss the added enjoyment of reading the original, obtainable at your school or public library' (1959: 45). This exhortation is followed by three pages of solid text, one giving a brief biography of George Alfred Henty with a note about some of the other books he wrote, the next on Wallenstein, 'One of the most powerful military figures to emerge during the Thirty Years' War, (1959: flyleaf), and a final page on the process of the Thirty Years' War. I conclude that the history is not lost, but it is presented in a less detailed and exciting way than it is in the original. The amount of detailed description of both history and battle in the original, together with the depiction and development of the characters, provides a depth of understanding of the period and the event not available to the reader of the graphic version.

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## **Sequences of Frames by Young Creators: The Impact of Comics in Children's Artistic Development**

*Vasiliki Labitsi, Ministry of Education and University of the Aegean, Greece*

Drawing is a sign system that is culturally acquired rather than innately and naturally unfolding as children grow up. They develop drawing abilities through borrowing from and copying the many visual sources available in their surrounding visual environments. Comics constitute a popular and attractive visual source which has a strong positive impact in many children's artistic development. For example, popular media, especially manga and anime (animated cartoons) have an enormous influence on Japanese children's graphic narratives. Research into Japanese children's drawings has shown that they resemble manga and anime so closely that it is possible to develop a classification system based on specific types of manga character.

In this paper, narrative drawings derived from four studies conducted in Greece with 6–10-year-old children were presented and analysed in terms of the representation of fundamental narrative elements, the use of basic comic characteristics, the linguistic

elements incorporated, and their interaction with the images and with thematic and content dimensions. The frequent use of typical comic conventions such as speech balloons, action lines and visual symbols in non-sequential children's drawings was also illustrated and discussed.

It was concluded that children can learn to master multiple pictorial genres, each of which has its own structural characteristics and serves particular purposes. Every time they draw, they employ purposefully the genre that can carry most effectively the meanings they intend to communicate and share. The comic form is one of these genres. Children can become fluent users of comics language and effective cartoonists from a very young age. Comics are a particularly sympathetic visual form for them, because they offer a convenient, popular and powerful vehicle to narrate stories. Mastering the communicational potential of comics also leads to the development of important drawing skills. Overall, creative engagement with the comics genre allows children to develop, unfold and communicate complete narratives important for their lives, and to develop understanding of aspects of their experienced and imagined worlds.

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## **'To Entertain and Educate Young Minds': Graphic Novels for Children in Indian Publishing**

*Malini Roy, Research Administrator, Chichester University, UK*

The phrase I have quoted within the title of this paper is taken from the mission statement of Campfire ([www.campfire.co.in](http://www.campfire.co.in)), the first (and probably only) publisher of graphic novels explicitly meant to appeal to young readers in India. The local context of production is key to this discussion, as the genre of the graphic novel is only five years old in India (the first graphic novel, Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor*, according to the publisher Penguin, came out as late as 2004). So far, the genre has been aimed at adult audiences. Here I am reading the Campfire graphic novels as a case study of the operations of the global economy in youth culture, within India's current position as a (rapidly) developing nation. This paper argues that while Campfire's pioneering of the graphic novel for young readers adds richness and diversity to (a presently narrow) reading culture amongst the young, the company's formulaic recapitulation of the alliterative jargon of the creative industry, 'to entertain and educate', signals that the commercial deployment of the genre is promoting the production, circulation and reception of troublingly conservative ideologies of neocolonialism, race, gender and class politics. This exposé offers a nuanced critical account of the graphic-novel genre in under-explored, non-Western contexts (thus excluding Japan). Simultaneously, I aim to qualify the common perception of graphic novels as a subversive genre (in Western epistemic contexts), owing to the genre's historical development from the traditionally low art of comics, or through associations such as stylised artwork that draws on Japanese manga techniques, eschewing Western conventions of narrative realism. Through this account, this paper offers the first scholarly discussion of the rapidly evolving corpus of the Campfire graphic novels, which has received adulatory but passing treatment so far in the print media in India, as well as the UK and USA.

The occasion for this study is the relative invisibility of critical literature on the graphic-novel genre in developing countries such as India, where market conditions differ significantly from the youth culture industries in Western or other developed economies such as Japan, and therefore beg a critical vocabulary in terms that revise the predicates of canonical studies of the genre by Will Eisner and Scott McCloud, amongst others. Post-colonial studies, especially on the visual culture of South Asian photography and calendar art, are of some use in understanding visual narratives in the Campfire books. But criticism specific to the genre of graphic novels remains a fertile, but nearly untilled terrain.

The Campfire graphic novels are peculiarly appropriate for an analysis of the word-image interplay integral to the genre. The texts are produced on an assembly-line model, where a freelancer, usually based in the USA, writes the script, which is then edited in

New Delhi by an editor from an urban background and educated in English, a language that bears associations of elitism and social empowerment from the colonial past. The script is then illustrated by local commercial artists usually from provincial backgrounds with limited access to the 'British English' culturally predominant in Commonwealth nations. This collaborative process of creation involves multiple stages of transnational and intra-national translation between the differing cultural backgrounds of each group. These inter-cultural dialogues have been made possible (and commercially profitable) through the impact of globalisation over the last two decades in India. This trans-cultural model, embedded in its historical moment, is visible in the strangely hybrid Campfire texts. The majority of the titles published (in English) are novels adapted from an Anglophone canon (many being racy narratives of imperialist fantasy with male characters, such as the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs). These titles are chosen, as per the company's agenda to entice young readers into habits of leisure reading (and hence acquire cultural capital, given the dismal literacy rate of 68%) through a Eurocentric tradition stretching back to colonial times. There is little concern for making the colonial narratives of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) more politically palatable in a post-colonial context. Campfire's promise to 'educate' as well as 'entertain' echoes that of the UK-based publisher Classical Comics, which has been adapting literary classics into graphic novels with an educational *raison d'être*; however, in practice at Campfire, the pedagogical directives of the edited scripts are often lost in translation as the illustrators add ludic touches in their artwork contradicting the printed word. Through close readings of the texts, this paper mines these graphic novels as sites of the enactment of different kinds of identity politics, theoretically informed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Other Asias* (2005), as I stress and foreground the plurality and diversity of post-colonial contexts.

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## **Strangely Familiar: Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* and the Universalised Immigrant Experience**

*Lara Saguisag, Rutgers University, NJ, USA*

In Shaun Tan's graphic novel *The Arrival* (2006), a nameless immigrant tries to make sense of the strange symbols, creatures and machines that he encounters in a new country. *The Arrival* asks the reader to identify with the protagonist: through the use of fantastical images and wordless narrative, the reader is made to experience the estrangement that an immigrant may feel as he or she attempts to assimilate into a new country.

The paradox is that, in its effort to create a sense of defamiliarisation, *The Arrival* still strongly adheres to Western conventions of reading. For one thing, the narrative follows the Western convention of texts being read left to right. The book also operates on the assumption that pictorial depictions of gestures and facial expressions can be universally understood.

Moreover, *The Arrival* is based on a Western, and arguably American, understanding of immigration. Alluding to iconic images of immigrants entering the USA via Ellis Island, the book insists that immigrants have a common history. *The Arrival* imagines that all immigrants suffer in their country of origin and are able to attain security and happiness only in their adoptive country. While the visuals depict the diversity of immigrants' physical characteristics and origins, the fantastical setting decontextualises and thus universalises the immigration experience. In obscuring the differences between immigrant life stories, *The Arrival* ultimately naturalises Western myths about immigration and assimilation.

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## Journeys in Time in Graphic Novels from Greece

*Mariana Spanaki, University of Ioannina, Greece*

Comics with themes of ancient, medieval and modern Greek history have been published in Greece since the 1950s with a renewal of interest in the 1980s. For instance, all eleven comedies by Aristophanes appeared in comic format in that period. From the year 2000 the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* promoted the comics work of young graphic artists, publishing it in its weekly comics magazine 9. Reprints from Greek comics and new graphic novels are simultaneously available in bookshops alongside graphic novels in English and in translation. Influences by well-known artists and scriptwriters such as Goscinny, Hergé and Spiegelman, are visible in the Greek graphic novels as well as elements from the American styles of comics and the manga tradition. These may be noted in more recently published works, indicative of the trends in development. Reprints include popularly acclaimed works for children, such as the series of stories under the title *Froutopia* (2004) by Evgenios Trivizas and Nikos Maroulakis, centred on the continuing defence of anthropomorphic fruits against aggression on the part of greengrocers and fruit factories.

Adaptations by George Akokalidis and Tasos Apostolidis of Aristophanes' comedies use a variety of popular subtexts including folk songs and colloquial expressions. Their version of Aristophanes' *Βάτραχοι* [Frogs] (2006) uses a very inventive language offering a crossover comic as well as an educational opportunity to read adaptations of ancient drama in a graphic format. In a similar crossover narrative context are graphic stories by Arkas (pen name) under the title *Look Dad I'm Flying* (2006), which first appeared in the 1990s in the newspaper *Eleftherotypia*. Today it is read by a mixed readership, including young teenagers, in a volume with collected stories with common themes. The main characters are two anthropomorphic birds, a father and a son, living on the tops of multi-storey buildings and often discussing environmental issues and everyday life, with comic and subversive overtones.

*Ζεστή Σοκολάτα* [Hot Chocolate] by G. Tsoukis (2007) and *Μανιφέστο* [Manifesto] (2005) by Illias Kyriazis use some features of the manga tradition. The first one presents a slow-paced narrative of the reunion of two friends. *Manifesto* addresses adults, but is also read by younger readers. It partly draws from the manga tradition and independent American comics, focusing on an Athens comic artist and current Athenian lifestyle. Both narratives explore the interconnection between childhood and young adulthood.

In the vein of historical fiction and war themes are two graphic novels. Aggelou, Pittakidis, Yannis Pittakidis and Vasilis Revezikas' *Αστράπικας και Βροντίκας: Οι ήρωες του Πόντου. Η επανάκτηση της Πόλης-1261 μΧ* [Astrapikas and Vrontikas: The Pontic Heroes. The Recapturing of the City – 1261 (Istanbul [Constantinople])] (2008) explores issues of territoriality and conflict in medieval Asia Minor. The two main characters are modelled on Asterix and Obelix. It is one of the few Greek publications for children and young adults to use humour to address historical events. The second one, *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth* (2009) by Apostolos Doxiadis, Christos Papadimitriou, Alecos Papadatos and Annie Di Donna centres on the philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell. The novel has transatlantic dimensions as it discusses Second World War themes and Russell's support for the involvement of the Americans in the war in Europe. The narrative develops on two lines, firstly presenting Russell's life from when he, as a young child, joins his grandparents, to his studies and marriages, and his work as a mathematician and educator. The second line shows the team which created the graphic novel reflecting on understanding Russell's work, thus offering helpful insights to the implied reader. By placing mathematics in an emotional context, the graphic novel presents a fascinating account of Russell's life and also aspects of his perceptions of war and science. Books such as these may attract young readers and operate as crossover fiction for a wider readership.

## Crossing Boundaries

*Emma Vieceli, author and illustrator, UK*

Comics in themselves are a boundary-straddling medium. To some they are art, to others they are stories; to some a travesty and to others a work of genius. In truth, they're probably all of these and much, much more. Comics have crossed and continue to cross frontiers, both those between various subjects and between the more superficial boundaries between different media: film, TV, games and books.

I see my work as crossing boundaries in several ways. First, I should mention the Manga Shakespeare series published by SelfMadeHero. Here is an obvious example of crossing boundaries. Taking Shakespeare's words and applying them to comics form is not an entirely original concept of course, but doing it now, at a time when comics are so appealing to the kinds of audience that society deems to lack interest in Shakespeare, was a genius stroke by the publishers – one that paid off! I thoroughly enjoyed being the artist for *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Hamlet*. The reactions I've seen from readers suggest that society was wrong: these young people are not averse to Shakespeare's work, but are not keen on the idea of simply reading it in plain text form. After all, Shakespeare himself intended his works to be seen and not read. We wouldn't sit down and read *Coronation Street* in script form, after all. So, bridging the gap between words and images, as comics do so well, seemed a key to create new fans of the Bard's work.

The books crossed other boundaries as well.

**Male/Female:** A very equal cross-section of male and female readers seemed interested in the titles

**Age:** Shakespeare is fairly universal, though full enjoyment of him is normally saved for older audiences. Surely those same older audiences wouldn't be interested in the works in comics form – a medium reserved for younger audiences? Untrue! It seemed that younger audiences were happy to accept Shakespeare's work if it was in comics form, and older audiences were happy to accept the comics form if it was portraying the works of the Bard. A win-win scenario?

**Western/Eastern:** My work, and the work of the other artists on the titles, is often linked to the Japanese manga aesthetic – in fact, the series is called 'Manga Shakespeare'. However all but one of the artists involved live here in the UK and most are British. In time, the books have started to be reviewed on typically Western comics-orientated websites and blogs, and are making their way into mainstream media. I even did a short series of documentaries for the BBC Blast website featuring *Much Ado About Nothing*, so perhaps they're crossing that unseen boundary between what we call 'manga' and what we call 'comics'. Though that is a whole different debate.

I see the rest of my work as crossing some of the following boundaries.

**Colour/Black and white:** Because colour printing was once very expensive, many Eastern comics artists used a black-and-white medium which allowed them to play with space and design, and also encouraged the development of specialist black-and-white techniques, such as screen toning. This resulted in meandering, thoughtful and whimsical storytelling, unlike that of coloured comics where the cost of printing meant publishers had to cram as much action into a page as possible to get their money's worth. This made me want to try it. But now that printing costs are decreasing, I've been afforded the luxury of working in colour, and have attempted to apply the storytelling I've learned in black-and-white comics to full-colour pages. This has been a challenging boundary to cross.

**Digital/Natural media:** Like most artists I started working in natural media. I loved working with pencils on paper and using fineliners to ink. But at some point during the creation of *Hamlet*, I fell in love with digital inking and, these days, I don't ink on paper any more if I can help it. My work process is: pencils/roughs on paper;

scan in; ink/tone/letter in Manga Studio, a process which allows me to enjoy my work; and hit my deadlines.

**Male/Female:** That old chestnut again. Time and time again we're proving now that comics are not solely a boys' medium. David Fickling was careful not to aim *The DFC* at one gender rather than the other, and the result was a mixed audience. I'm happy that my own series published through Sweatdrop Comics, *Dragon Heir* (2001–), seems to have a mixed-gender readership. There will always be titles more geared to one gender of course, but the only thing that turns female readers away seems to be when a text is targeted intentionally at them. Nevertheless, I have to admit that some of my current work in France is in magazines specifically targeted at young girls. There really is no right and wrong, but bridging the boundaries between our notions of what appeals to male or female readers can't ever be a bad thing.

We're in an age where comics are adapting classic literature, inspiring new films and games, encouraging new artists and pushing the boundaries of storytelling. It's a very exciting time and I'm thrilled to be a part of such a vibrant, ever-shifting industry.

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## Superhero Comics and Graphic Novels

*Jessica Yates, reviewer and researcher, UK*

The superhero comic began with Superman, invented by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, who made his comic-book debut in *Action Comics* in 1938. In 1939 Bob Kane invented Batman, a masked vigilante, who first appeared in *Detective Comics*, a title which gave its name to the publishing company as DC. More superheroes included Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Flash and Wonder Woman.

Meanwhile Timely Publications started their own roster of superheroes, opening in 1939 with the Human Torch and Namor the Sub-Mariner in *Marvel Comics* no.1 (October 1939). In 1941 Captain America, a Second World War hero wielding a shield instead of a gun, joined them. He was created by Joe Simon and artist Jack Kirby. Young Stan Lee joined the company as an office boy with ambitions to write comics.

The American comic-book industry went up a blind alley in the 1950s as comic books fed the enthusiasm of American troops for horror stories. An outcry on both sides of the Atlantic led to the ban on horror comics, and from 1954 American comic books would bear the cover logo 'Approved by the Comics Code Authority'.

Rivalry between DC and Timely–Marvel led to the latter's publisher asking Stan Lee to create some new comic-book superheroes to rival DC's stable. In 1961, Lee created the Fantastic Four with Jack Kirby, and in the next few years he added the Amazing Spider-Man, Thor, Hulk, Iron Man, the X-Men and the Avengers, as well as a number of colourful villains. Fans were enthusiastic about this new breed of worried superheroes, especially Spider-Man with his money and girlfriend troubles. The fan mail poured in, and Stan Lee announced 'The Merry Marvel Marching Society' and gave his team nicknames. Kirby was 'the King' and Stan was first 'Smilin' Stan' and then 'Stan the Man' which he still is today.

With the increased number of magazines, new blood was needed for artists and scripters; in Britain a weekly magazine, *2000 AD*, was founded in 1977 to showcase British talent and get it noticed by the big American publishers. This was styled the British way with several different serial stories per issue; the most famous of its early creations was Judge Dredd, a law-enforcer of the future. One of its outstanding writers was Alan Moore, much of whose serial work has been collected in graphic novels. *The Ballad of Halo Jones* (serialised first, and issued in three volumes in 1987 and in one volume in 1991, both editions from Titan Books) and *V for Vendetta* (serialised first, then published in 1988 by DC) are early works, and in the early 1980s DC commissioned him to create a twelve-part maxi-series about superheroes, set in an alternative universe. He selected Dave Gibbons as his co-creator, and *Watchmen*

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(serialised in 1986–1987 and published in one volume in 1987 by DC and Titan Books) became a cult and a large-format paperback, winning literary accolades. Meanwhile, with Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* (DC, 1986) and more mainstream political graphic novels such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (first a serial and then collected in two volumes in 1986 and 1992), Keiji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* by (Japan, 1972–1973, translated into English from 1975 onwards; the current edition in English is from Last Gasp of San Francisco, 2004–2005) and Raymond Briggs' *When the Wind Blows* (Hamish Hamilton, 1982), it seemed that superhero comics had also become respectable. Matters did not quite go that way, as authors had to earn their living working for the weeklies and monthlies. However, long story arcs could be agreed between editor and artists, and, if they sold well, could be retrospectively published as graphic novels.

Cinema and TV versions of superhero narratives, especially Superman, had been going for a long time, and many fondly remember the boldly heroic, verging on camp, *Batman* of the 1960s. The watershed came with the opening of *Star Wars* in 1977, which set new standards for special effects; the director George Lucas set up Industrial Light & Magic in California to produce effects for his own and other movies. *Superman: The Movie* (1978) was the first to benefit from this approach, and it had three sequels. The next comic-book character to open a franchise was Batman in 1989, again with three sequels, though not with the same star for the final two. It was another decade before Marvel benefited from the new techniques, although for years there had been animated versions of, for example, the X-Men, Spider-Man and the Silver Surfer. The first Marvel blockbuster was *X-Men* (2000) with two sequels, and overlapping them came *Spider-Man* (2002), also with two sequels. We have also had two films about the Fantastic Four, two of the Hulk, one Daredevil, a Wolverine, and an Iron Man, and we look forward to *Iron Man 2*, *Thor* and *The Avengers*. I propose three criteria for a successful Marvel movie: the story must be faithful to the comic book, with the first movie an 'origin' story; the actors must resemble their comic-book counterparts; and the effects must be state of the art. In their box office and DVD sales and general reputation, the Marvel blockbusters of the last decade have fulfilled those criteria.

Superhero graphic novels belong to the science-fiction genre, but there are occasional fantasy graphic novels. These are some of my favourites, all with a British or European flavour somewhere: Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (adapted by Charles Dixon and illustrated by David Wenzel, originally in three volumes (Eclipse, 1989) and in one volume from 1990, with an enlarged second edition, published by Tolkien's official publisher HarperCollins, 2006); and Wagner's opera *The Ring of the Nibelung* from America (adapted by Roy Thomas and illustrated by Gil Kane, for DC in four volumes, 1989–1990). I also have *Luther Arkwright* by British author-artist Bryan Talbot, which was begun as a serial in 1978, reached a nine-part edition in 1989 from Dark Horse, who now publish a one-volume edition (2007), and *The Colour of Magic*, adapted by Scott Rockwell and illustrated by Steven Ross (Corgi, 1991), the first of four graphic novels set in Terry Pratchett's Discworld.

Neil Gaiman is an original, award-winning fantasy talent. Two of his *Sandman* series feature Shakespeare (volume 3 *Dream Country* (Vertigo/DC, 1995) and volume 10 *The Wake* (Vertigo/DC1997)), while his graphic novel *1602* about the Marvel universe, is set 400 years ago (Marvel, 2004). My favourite fantasy graphic is undoubtedly *Camelot 3000* (issued in twelve parts between 1982 and 1985, and in one volume by DC in 1988), a futuristic retelling of the Arthurian legend by the American author Mike Barr, illustrated by the British artist Brian Bolland. I would recommend this to children's book specialists who aren't interested in superheroes; and they would, I hope, enjoy an adult graphic version of the great legend they already know.

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## Composing and Performing Masculinities: Of Reading Boys' Comics c. 1930–1955

*Hilary Young, The Open University, UK*

There is currently much concern among educationalists, librarians and teachers about how to get boys reading. The reasons why some boys don't read are complex. Gender stereotypes may be one: some boys do not identify reading as a leisure activity appropriate to their sex. This tension between reading and gender has historical precedents. In some autobiographies written by men who grew up in the 1930s and 1940s, memories of fathers' reactions to their sons reading appear: these include identifying reading as something girls do, rather than boys, and viewing it as a waste of time. Readership surveys conducted prior to the Second World War considered boys' leisure practices and concluded that reading often competed with sport, fretwork and carpentry as their leisure activities of choice (Caradog Jones, 1934: 219–20; Engledow and Farr, 1933: 12–13). The rise and wealth of women's magazines in the 1930s as a site of feminine consumption contributed to unease around young men's reading habits, and moral panics about children's reading continued throughout the Second World War and into the 1950s. Traditional histories of child readers have used readership surveys to quantify readership, but when attempting to explore the act, practice and meaning of reading in boys' everyday lives, such surveys have limited scope. Due to the wealth of men's lifestyle magazines currently on sale, such as Condé Nast's *GQ* (*Gentlemen's Quarterly*, 1988) and *FHM* (*For Him Magazine*, 1990), the discourse surrounding reading and gender is changing (Benwell, 2003). It is within this current discourse of men's reading that the men interviewed for a project about their boyhood reading experiences constructed their identities as readers. The paper summarised here used their memories of reading boys' comics in the 1940s and 1950s as a basis for an examination of how men remember boyhood reading, if at all.

These personal testimonies highlight what boys in the mid-twentieth century read, how they read it and why they read it, as well as what they did not read. Recent developments in the practice and theories of oral history allow us to question how memories of reading are remembered and how men compose memories of reading as a legitimate activity for boys (Dawson, 1994; Summerfield, 2001). The men used three techniques to compose identities for themselves as readers when boys. Firstly, performativity was central to men's memories of reading. Memories of entrepreneurial tactics employed to acquire comics, together with playing and staging games based on plots of the comics they had read, created a sense of action and performance associated with an activity that is sometimes seen as passive and static. Secondly, men recalled that certain characters from comics compelled them to read. 'Alf Tupper, The Tough of the Track' from *The Rover* was identified as a good masculine hero to emulate or look up to for many working-class male readers. Finally, new production techniques such as those used by Hulton Press to produce *Eagle* in 1951 were remembered by some men, and this allowed them to identify themselves as youthful consumers of a post-war cultural phenomenon and to present themselves as experts of the genre.

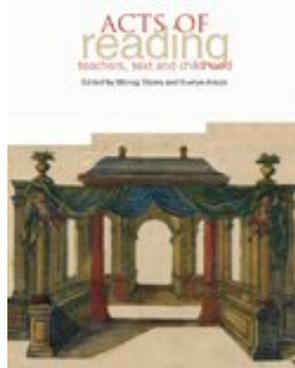
The oral history interviews emphasised that memories of reading were composed in response to both past and present discourses of gender and boyhood. The majority of the men were able to compose coherent narratives of their boyhood reading activities and not reject reading comics as feminine or frivolous. Although they do not discuss masculinity or gender stereotypes openly within their narratives, it is possible to identify narrative techniques and styles used by these men to construct suitable masculine identities for themselves as readers. Publicly available discourses of men's reading today impacted on how these men composed identities for themselves. The men remembered that their experiences of reading involved a public performance and was a group activity as opposed to a solitary private pastime. A cultural focus such as this on memories of reading allows the legitimisation of experiences which have not been considered before or previously legendised.

## REVIEWS

### Books about Children's Literature

#### *Acts of Reading: Teachers, Text and Childhood*

Morag Styles and Evelyn Arizpe (ed.) (2009), Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, pb 978 1 8585 6438 8, £18.99, 2009, 256pp.



Little did Jane Johnson know that the tiny books and literacy games she made for her own children in the mid-eighteenth century would prove to be so productive for children's literature studies some 250 years hence. Morag Styles and Evelyn Arizpe's volume is the latest to take Johnson as its inspiration, this time in pursuit of historical changes in the act of reading and the elusive but essential role of the imagination in children's literary experiences. At first sight this is an eclectic set of papers; indeed, in her introduction Morag Styles emphasises the variety and byways of the journey her readers are about to undertake. But there are sufficient common strands and recurring questions about effective literacy learning and children's responses to what they read for there to be a loose link between contributions. A discussion by Arizpe and Styles about Aesop as one source for Jane Johnson's maxims, for example, leads to Judith Graham's lively history of illustrated Aesops across five centuries (the minimal number of illustrations in this chapter is probably down to cost – this reader was itching to see more). Similarly, Johnson's role as an educating mother is replicated in Karlijn Navest's account of Lady Ellenor Fern and her lessons for 'baby grammarians'. Navest's introduction to Fern's immensely popular *Cobwebs to Catch Flies: or, Dialogues in Short Sentences, Adapted to Children from the Age of Three to Eight Years* (1783), written for her adopted nephew William, alerts us to the early understanding of the value of teaching literacy through play that Johnson and Fern shared. On the same tack, Valerie Coghlan and Geraldine O'Connor's account of the Kildare Place Society's role in nineteenth-century education in Ireland cites the society's interest in a most intriguing educative plaything, a 'rudiment box' – based on the 'Excitor' in use in the Chelsea Infant School – consisting of pictures and text attached to linen rolls that could be unfurled at will. Such gems suggest that early education was, at times, exciting indeed.

A set of three chapters on the imagination enters different, more speculative territory to address the impact of literature on the imaginative education of the Romantic poets and their ambivalent representation of childhood. David Whitley's analysis of Wordsworth's plea for the child's freedom to read competing narrative discourses amply repays a close reading, since it addresses the radical nature of childhood power. Adults cannot control children's responses to reading matter that becomes numinous in unexpected ways. 'Reading fictions', the penultimate section of the book, is the least coherent. Topics range from Vivienne Smith's advocacy of Kevin Crossley Holland's representation of literacy learning in *The Seeing Stone* as significant for today's young readers, to Elizabeth Hammill on how to exhibit children's books and Laura Tosi on the well-trodden ground of updating fairy tales.

It is the child who takes centre stage in this collection, so that in the closing chapters on reading in the digital age (Anouk Lang) and on teachers as readers in the twenty-first century (Teresa Cremin, Eve Bearne, Marilyn Mottram and Prue Goodwin) that focus on adults, it is the implications for young readers that matter. This collection may not be tightly themed, but there are instances here of real research and some deep reflections on children's literature and the child reader that make for invigorating reading and will provide a rich source for future scholars.

**Gillian Lathey**

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### ***The Writings of Hesba Stretton: Reclaiming the Outcast***

Elaine Lomax, Farnham: Ashgate, hb 978 0 7546 5576 3, £55.00, 2009, 252pp.

It may well be that the name Hesba Stretton is not familiar to many contemporary readers. However, her books have recently experienced a renaissance with the publication of many of her most popular titles that have been out of print and are now republished by Dodo Press and BiblioBazaar. Furthermore, some of her books are now available as e-texts and can be read online or downloaded free of charge from [www3.shropshire-cc.gov.uk/intros/X000061.htm](http://www3.shropshire-cc.gov.uk/intros/X000061.htm).

*The Writing of Hesba Stretton* by Elaine Lomax is evidence that there is an increasing interest in her work and in Victorian literature for children in general. The book is a much welcome introduction to the life and work of one of the most popular evangelical writers for children. The work of Hesba Stretton (pen name of Sarah Smith, 1832–1911) has always been associated with waif literature, which was very popular during the second half of the nineteenth century. *Jessica's First Prayer* (1867) is a quintessential work that sold half a million copies and was translated into many languages. This title constitutes the main example of its genre.

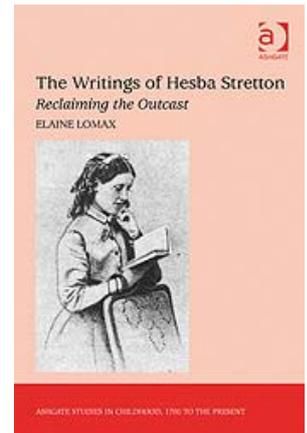
Stretton's work has never been given the critical attention that it deserves. Lomax has put this to right by analysing her work in a new light. For instance there are whole chapters dedicated to the vision of childhood, religion, and the idea of womanhood and society's outcast.

We can only speculate about the laborious and challenging task of writing a biography of Stretton, particularly as there are not many primary sources available to refer to. The only resources available are her log books (a type of diary), which are now kept at the Shropshire Archives in Shrewsbury, and Stretton's correspondence with publishers (mainly the Religious Tract Society) and friends, as well as articles published in magazines of the time. The commendable task of Lomax has been that of extracting aspects of Stretton's personality directly from her work, for example resemblances to the female writer-protagonist in *Cobwebs and Cables*. Lomax states that from Stretton's writing we can discover her attitude towards many areas of life and society such as poverty, injustice, religion, politics and the position of woman in a male-dominated world. It is worth remembering that Stretton was one of the founders of the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention to Cruelty to Children) and was an avid campaigner in raising awareness of child abuse and child poverty. In fact she fought hard as a social reformer to bring equality and justice to the underprivileged, especially women, children and the elderly.

Not many books have been written about Hesba Stretton and her work. Most secondary sources give the same information and make reference to *Jessica's First Prayer*, disregarding most of her other literary output. The other main authoritative secondary source on this subject is Nancy Cutt's *Ministering Angels*, which was published in 1979. But even here Stretton's work is confined to two chapters, the rest of the book being devoted to other evangelical writers for children like ALOE ('A Lady of England': Charlotte Tucker) and 'Brenda' (Georgina Castle Smith). A more recent publication *A Victorian Quartet: Four Forgotten Women Authors* by Liz Thiel, Elaine Lomax, Bridget Carrington and Mary Sebag-Montefiore (2008) contains a section by Elaine Lomax 'Writing Other Lives: The Outcast Narratives of Hesba Stretton', which is a good introduction to her book being discussed here.

*The Writings of Hesba Stretton* is a scholarly work and as such it tends to be overwhelmingly populated with notes and references to primary and secondary sources, even within the main text, which sometimes makes it awkward reading. Nevertheless, due to its nature and the thorough research carried out, such a style, can be easily justified.

The book has a complete bibliography of Stretton's work arranged in chronological order as well as a list of articles, stories and chapters by this author, together with a list of correspondence from Stretton to newspapers, her publishers and other people and organisations. Also included is a list of the archives consulted and complete secondary



sources before and after 1911, which will be most useful and apposite tools for those who want to carry out further research on this subject. There are eighteen figures from the original work and some photographs of Stretton as a young woman and in her later years.

Lomax tends to assume that readers are familiar with Stretton's work, and makes constant references to this body of literature. Nevertheless, readers will be able to complement this academic work with Stretton's fictional works now available in the market. Overall this is an important contribution to a subject that has been neglected for a long time and will hopefully encourage further study and research on Hesba Stretton and her literary output.

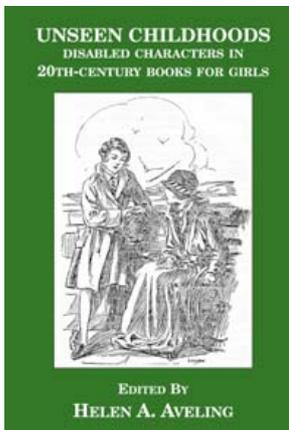
### Ed Zaghini

Note from editor: *A Victorian Quartet: Four Forgotten Women Writers* (reviewed in *IBBYLink* 25) includes a section by Elaine Lomax on Hesba Stretton, together with sections on 'Brenda', Mary Molesworth and Flora Shaw by Liz Thiel, Mary Sebag-Montefiore and Bridget Carrington, respectively.

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### *Unseen Childhoods: Disabled Characters in 20th-Century Books for Girls*

Helen A. Aveling (ed.), London: Bettany Press, hb 978 0 9552 9737 3, £14.99, 2009, 344pp.



The title of this book is intended to reflect the way in which, until very recently, children with disabilities, perhaps particularly girls, were often shut away in institutions, forgotten by their families. The situation scarcely improved with maturity, as even today, disabled women can very easily be thoughtlessly excluded from social activities – thus, as Helen Aveling suggests in her Introduction, rendering their lives meaningless and insignificant in the view of society. In an attempt to redress this balance, Aveling asked self-defined disabled women 'to examine the way in which physical and mental or emotional impairment is shown and used in children's fiction', using insights garnered from their own experience. Several of the chapters make explicit reference to the 'social model of disability', which holds as central the concept that society, rather than their own impairment, is what disables people who are excluded from certain public arenas.

Aveling's initial chapter in the first section, 'Stereotypes', considers a range of children's classics by L.M. Montgomery, Eleanor Porter, Frances Hodgson Burnett and E. Nesbit, aimed at readers aged about twelve. She is particularly critical of Porter's *Pollyanna* (1913) and the girl's 'glad game' which often results in the character speaking in 'platitudes to ill people as if this is the only way that an invalid can understand' (p.43). Linda Dick, examining books by Judy Blume, Madeleine L'Engle, Jean Little, Rosemary Sutcliff (herself disabled) and Meriol Trevor, finds, perhaps unsurprisingly, that Drem, the protagonist of *Warrior Scarlet* (1976), is the only disabled character who challenges his society's values without conforming to these by becoming 'normal' – unlike so many other fictional characters, who are finally, and unrealistically, healed from impairment. Louise Norlie focuses on a large range of late twentieth-century texts, finding that only Elizabeth Feuer's *Paper Doll* (1990) 'presents a disabled person as a believable and multifaceted human being with both strengths and weaknesses' (p.109). Too many characters are seen to discard wheelchairs and canes, thus devaluing those readers who may well be unable to dispense with such aids. Norlie is disappointed with the lack of progress even at the end of the twentieth century as far as avoiding stereotyping is concerned.

Aveling herself also contributes a chapter to the second section, 'Role Models', in which she examines the portrayal of physical impairment in some early twentieth-century girls' school stories. Perhaps of most interest to her is Winifred, in Dorita Fairlie Bruce's *St Brides* stories, who neither dies nor is cured, unlike so many other fictional wheelchair-bound characters. Instead she becomes a valued member of the school staff, being treated in the same way as her colleagues, a very rare phenomenon in schoolgirl fiction. Deborah Kent's chapter about fiction from the middle of the twentieth century focuses particularly on the character of Mary in Laura Ingalls Wilder's 'Little House' series

(1932–1943). Kent discloses the resentment that she, when herself a blind child, felt about the passivity of Laura’s blind sister, which she contrasts with Lucy Boston’s Susan in *The Chimneys of Green Knowe* (1958), who takes an active part in the adventure. Finally in this section, Meredith Guthrie examines the portrayal of diabetes in contemporary young adult fiction, observing that the issue generally seems to be that of whether or not young people, forced to live with a condition that will always demand their attention, define themselves as different from the rest of their peer group.

The theme of the third section, ‘Inclusion and Segregation’, is also treated in three chapters that divide up the twentieth century. Ju Gosling and Julie Newman discuss disability and mental health in Elsie J. Oxenham’s *Abbey School* series (1914–1959), finding that in the depiction of physical illness, Oxenham resembles ‘her peers: major characters are either cured; or they die’ (p.221). More distinctive is Oxenham’s approach to mental-health issues, generally shirked by most writers of this period. She does not stigmatise characters with problems of this kind, implying rather that they can arise from stifled creativity, and that sufferers can be assisted by an active life and sympathetic support – an understanding that reveals Oxenham as ahead of her time. Gosling also provides an analysis of Elinor Brent-Dyer’s *Chalet School* books (1925–1970), revealing the difference between the author’s pre-war and post-war novels as far as the issue of disability is concerned: while the earlier novels seem to put forward the desirability of inclusion, the later ones tend to associate disabled characters with selfishness and to recommend a policy of segregation – an attitude that Gosling suggests may well be reflected in the currently greater popularity of the earlier books. Finally, Rebecca Butler, well-known to readers of *IBBYLink* for her many reviews and articles, propounds the hypothesis that disability makes fictional sibling relationships more complex and ambivalent. Analysing Lois Keith’s *A Different Life* (1998), Jacqueline Wilson’s *Sleepovers* (2001) and James Riordan’s *The Gift* (2004), she shows how the disabled characters in these texts are central to the plot development, but that only in the first-named text are they given three-dimensionality.

This book is certainly to be welcomed, as it is written from all too rare a perspective and consequently supplies insights that might not be immediately available to all readers. Since the choice of focal texts is personal to each of the authors, the book makes no claim to provide a general perspective, but there are interesting readings of a wide range of texts, including books that are likely to be unfamiliar to many.

**Pat Pinsent**

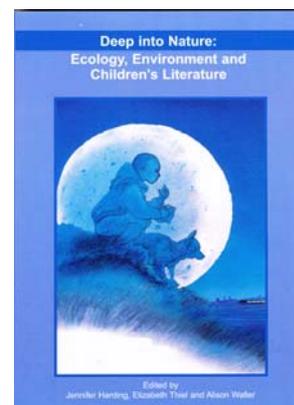
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### ***Deep into Nature: Ecology, Environment and Children’s Literature (IBBY/NCRCL Papers 16)***

Jennifer Harding, Elizabeth Thiel and Alison Waller (ed.), Lichfield: Pied Piper Publishing, pb 978 0 9552 1069 3, £20, 2009, 296pp.

This compilation of the papers given at the 2008 IBBY/NCRCL MA conference is handsomely supported not only by a central section containing 47 coloured illustrations from some of the books discussed, but also by 13 black-and-white plates inserted within the text at relevant points. Thus it is both an attractive, economically priced volume, and a convincing testimony to the integration between word and picture, especially in relation to the pressing nature of the subject to which it is devoted.

Because the book contains the text of 26 of the papers given at the conference, it would be invidious to discuss any of them in detail to the detriment of the others, so I shall highlight some of the themes which unite them. Thiel and Waller’s Introduction explains the rationale for dividing the collection into two sections, reflecting ‘the distinction between *practitioners*, who create or make use of children’s literature, and *commentators*, who examine the way this literature reveals relationships we all have with our environment’ (p.2, italics original), though they readily admit that this division cannot be absolute. Inevitably the papers in the former section tend to be the more practical, offering many resources for teachers and others who want to educate young

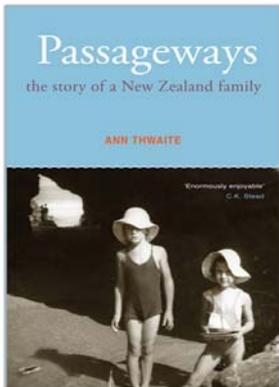


people, in particular, about the environment, but none of them can be seen as boringly didactic or overly polemical.

Articles in the second section range widely, touching on the historical roots of children's literature that focuses on the environment, including some of the forgotten women writers who popularised science. They also range far and wide, from Lapland and Sweden to Australia, via Thailand and Japan. Several papers comment on the fears that urban children may have about wild nature, and attention is given to various non-fiction approaches to the environment. Interestingly, the most cited fictional text is Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911), obviously an important forerunner that has probably in its time introduced many generations of children to the excitement of the regeneration of nature. The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness series by Michelle Paver (who was herself a speaker but unfortunately was not able to contribute her paper to the book), seems to be runner-up, perhaps revealing a nostalgia for the viewed pristine qualities of the Stone Age! Inevitably, given the visual resources supplied, many articles show a keen awareness of the important role of picture books and illustration in general in fostering ecological awareness. At the same time, this is a landmark compilation of critical material on this contemporary theme, notably in providing a link to the pastoral tradition, as indicated by keynote speaker Roni Natov. Interestingly, one of the texts she discusses, Bryan Talbot's *The Tale of One Bad Rat* (1995), is a graphic novel, thus making a connection with the theme of the 2009 IBBY/NCRCL MA conference. All the papers are prefaced by abstracts, and there is a useful index.

Highly recommended as a book you will want to possess and to give to your friends!

**Pat Pinsent**



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***Passageways: The Story of a New Zealand Family***

Ann Thwaite, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, pb 978 1 8773 7267 4, £18.50, 2009, 352pp. (distributed in the UK through Gazelle Book Services, Lancaster: sales@gazellebooks.co.uk; available on www.amazon.co.uk).

Ann Thwaite will be known to most readers of *IBBYLink* from her definitive biographies of A.A. Milne and Frances Hodgson Burnett. It is no surprise that this book tracing the origins of her New Zealand family is a fascinating and well-documented social history of the people who made those two distant islands so very British. Well provided with family photos, it is a book to read at a leisurely pace. Perhaps the most interesting section is the account of the wartime childhood of Ann-Barbara (as she was known as a child) and her brother David, safely removed back to New Zealand to stay with relatives while their parents worked in London on enterprises such as the *New Zealand News*, a journal which enabled servicemen to keep in touch with home. In the account of her childhood and stay at boarding school, Thwaite reveals the sources of her own later writing, and while this book is not children's literature as such, it is likely to provide plenty of interest for readers of children's books.

**Pat Pinsent**

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## Children's Books

### *Running Wild*

Michael Morpurgo, London: HarperCollins Children's Books, hb 978 0 0072 6701 9, £12.99, 2009, 196pp.

Having read many stories by Michael Morpurgo to my children, I was looking forward to reading another. This story is about a boy's adventure with an elephant after the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004. In the Postscript, Morpurgo tells of his struggle to find a setting for this story, as he felt overshadowed by Kipling's 'The Elephant's Child' and the rest of *The Jungle Book*.

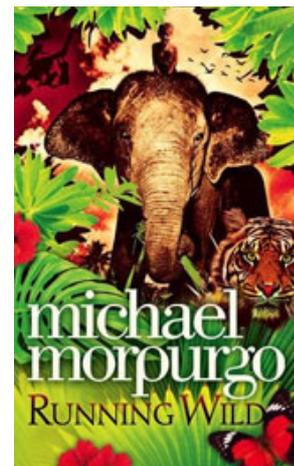
*Running Wild* is set around contemporary events. Will and his mother are struggling to come to terms with his father's recent death in the Iraq War. After they have failed to cope with their normal routine, his father's parents send them on holiday to Indonesia, from where his mother's family originated. The story concerns the relationship built up between Will and Oona, the elephant on which he was riding when the tsunami strikes. Oona escapes inland with Will, and the pair learn how to survive in the wild.

I found it difficult to enjoy the start of the story, as the use of big events – the Iraq War, the Tsunami – seem to provide an educational rationale rather than the book being simply a good narrative in itself. It is impossible for children to be sheltered from the news, and although some will have no personal experience of the events mentioned, the early part of the book felt a little like a lecture, while the suddenness of the onset of Will's orphan status was alarming: by the end of Chapter Two, his father has been killed, and his mother is presumed dead due to the tsunami.

However, once the story moves on to dealing with survival, it becomes gripping as it portrays the evolving understanding between child and elephant, the practicalities of staying alive and safe in a hostile environment, and the relationship between different species in the wild. The evocation of the place, and Will's memory of his relationship with family members add to its power.

At the conclusion, Morpurgo again turns to contemporary issues: the hunting of monkeys and the destruction of jungle to provide palm-oil plantations. Although these issues less often reach the news, the novel again feels overloaded by the need for these facts to be conveyed rather than the story being driven by its own momentum. Nevertheless, I did particularly enjoy the use of Blake's poem 'The Tyger' to create a sense of security for Will in the difficult situations he faces. The comprehensive Postscript contains the full poem, as well as explanations of the Iraq War, deforestation, orang-utans and tsunamis. In some cases it would be useful to read these before approaching the story.

I haven't yet read this book to my daughter (aged 10), but will do soon, as it is an engaging story that will no doubt stand the test of time given its reference to contemporary events.

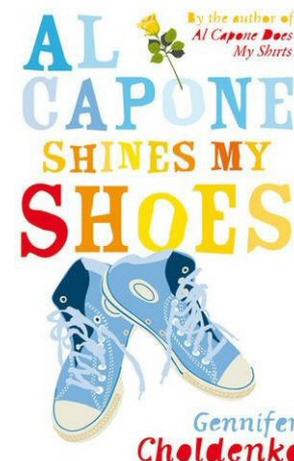


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### *Al Capone Shines my Shoes*

Gennifer Choldenko, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 1 4088 0155 0, £6.99, 2009, 288pp.

The author describes this as a novel, grounded in history, but heavily embroidered by her imagination. The story centres on the adventures of children living on Alcatraz in 1935 – a community brought together by employment on the island. The main character, Moose, becomes embroiled in a 'return of favours' with Al Capone, unbeknown to any of the adults. Though the favour Al Capone has supposedly done for Moose has presumably been referred to in a previous book, *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, this story nevertheless stands alone. Moose's sister Natalie is autistic and Moose believes that Al Capone enabled her to attend a suitable school on the mainland. Natalie leaves for school at the beginning of the story, and shortly after Moose receives a message from Capone in his laundry requesting a return favour. The children plan how to carry this out, without adult intervention, and in the end foil an escape plan by some of the convicts.



I was hooked from the beginning – the characteristics of the adults are so clearly portrayed through the eyes of the children, as well as how the children’s routines are organised to avoid contact with certain adults. The cynicism and pettiness of Officer Trixle, the eagerness of Moose’s father to do the right thing, the sullenness of Trixle’s teenage daughter are described succinctly, and the dynamics within and between the families are believable. The children make some lovely observations about adult characteristics that they discover to be important, but in this context they do not come across as teaching points; Moose remarks: ‘When I first moved here, I thought all the bad guys were on one side of the bars and all the good guys were on the other. But lately, I’ve begun to wonder if there isn’t at least one officer on the free side who ought to be locked up and maybe a convict who isn’t half as bad as he’s cracked up to be.’

This is indeed a novel first and foremost, a really good story. Choldenko’s notes at the back of the book explain the research that went into the book, mainly conversations with those who had lived on Alcatraz. This may explain why the characters are all so believable. I would recommend this story to any child (and adult!) over the age of 10.

### **Rachel Underwood**

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#### ***Payback***

Rosemary Hayes, London: Frances Lincoln Children’s Books, pb 978 1 8450 7935 2, £6.99, 2009, 207pp.

Halima is an apparently unremarkable young woman living in digs and studying at college. But in her past is a deadly secret. Her family came from a Pashtun village in Pakistan. Before they came to Britain, her father was involved in a land dispute. The man who sorted out the difficulty extracted a promise in return: the eight-year-old Halima is promised in marriage to the man’s son.

Ten years later Halima and her brother Imran are in revolt against the strict Islamic codes imposed by their parents. Halima’s situation is made worse by the example of her older sister, who has dutifully gone along with her parents’ wedding plans. When Halima speaks on the phone to the young man she is supposed to marry he says only that she is ‘owed’ to him. Ironically, Halima has now met and become attached to a Muslim boy, Mohammed, whom her parents would have found a perfectly acceptable marriage candidate had she not been promised elsewhere.

Halima’s Irish friend Kate helps open her eyes to the freedom a young woman is entitled to. And once she has left her parents’ home she is free to be friends again with her rebellious brother: free, that is, until she is attacked, drugged and kidnapped by a man acting for the father of her rejected bridegroom as part of a plan to transfer her to Saudi, where her promised husband now lives. The rest of the story narrates the attempts by Kate, Imran and Mohammed to find and liberate Halima.

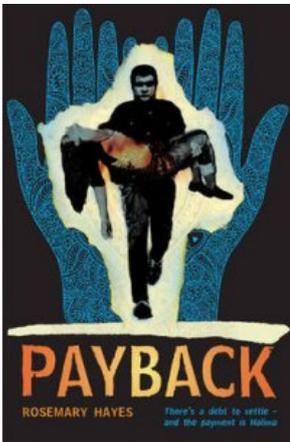
I am aware that this plot summary sounds as if the book strays into polemics. In fact the reverse is true. The diversity of viewpoints necessary to avoid preaching is provided by Halima, Kate and Mohammed, who all have their distinctive interpretation of the events.

The weakness of this book lies in the characterisation of the older generation. There is apparently nothing to be said on behalf of the parents. Halima’s mother is a downtrodden victim, and her father an overbearing tyrant who makes no attempt to adapt his ingrained values to the requirements of a different society. He hardly even bothers to learn English. If his over-protectiveness springs from any kind of credible motive, the reader is left to guess what it might be.

The cover illustration also lets the book down. This book proposes – and indeed delivers – a serious discussion about clashing cultural values, not the story of violent crime that the cover suggests.

### **Rebecca R. Butler**

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### ***Hetty Feather***

Jacqueline Wilson, Nick Sherratt (illus.), London: Doubleday, hb 978 0 3856 1444 3, £12.99, 2009, 394pp.

This celebrated author ventures into an unaccustomed genre, historical fiction. Hetty is a foundling, living in a hospital and ignorant of her true parentage. Such is the lowly status of these unfortunate children that their futures are already determined for them: the girls will enter domestic service and the boys will become soldiers. The tyrannical regime of the foundling hospital is described in detail. As babies, these children were farmed out to paid foster parents, with whom they might enjoy something close to a decent family life. But at the age of six, they had to be returned to the hospital. At that age they were deemed to be useful economic resources, capable of working for a living. Wilson renders this transition from family back to institutional life with agonising effect.

The children wear drab brown and white uniforms. Every Sunday, visitors who are potential adopters are encouraged to come and view the outcasts as they eat their meal – a better meal than on weekdays, to impress the visitors. Of course the boys and girls are firmly segregated from each other. As a punishment, wrongdoers can find themselves in solitary confinement without food. Hetty is among those who suffer this punishment.

Hetty runs away from the hospital on the day of Queen Victoria's jubilee. She sets out on a quest to determine her true identity and, if possible, to discover her natural mother. During her quest she encounters various adventures. They include starring in a circus and masquerading as a boy.

As a character, Hetty is feisty, rebellious and imaginative. Comparison with her modern-day counterpart Tracy Beaker is inevitable. I was surprised and impressed by Wilson's ability to sustain the customary vigour of her dialogue without violating a late nineteenth-century tone.

In the past I have taken issue with Jacqueline Wilson concerning her depiction in a contemporary novel of a disabled character, where I found this character to be represented merely as a bundle of symptoms. In the era in which this book is set, all disabled people were viewed in this unsatisfactory manner. What was a fault in Wilson's earlier characterisation becomes accurate reportage. Hetty's brother Saul walks with a crutch. We are left to suppose that his impairment is rickets. When influenza hits the foundling hospital, Saul is one of those infected. He uses his crutch not just to support his progress but also as a weapon. The reader is inclined to see Saul's aggressive use of his crutch as a determination to extract respect from a hostile world.

Nick Sherratt picks out key elements of the chapters and depicts them in black and white panels, executed with his customary delicacy and flair.

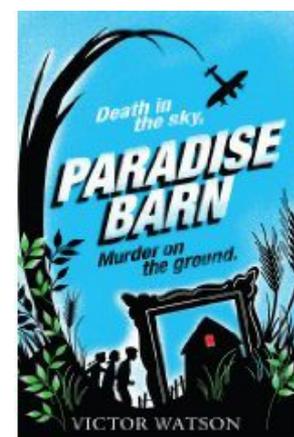
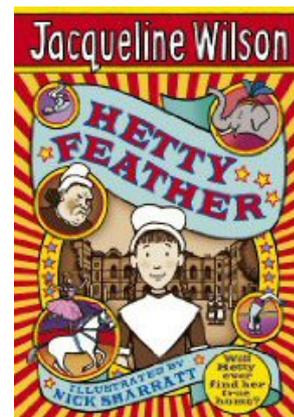
**Rebecca R. Butler**

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### ***Paradise Barn***

Victor Watson, London: Catnip, pb 978 1 8464 7091 2, £6.99, 2009, 288pp.

It takes courage for experts on children's literature to write their own novels for young readers, but in Victor Watson's case this gamble has paid off. His story about three children living in the Fens and solving a crime during the Second World War is well imagined, freshly written – apart from one reference to an 'eerie silence' – and cleverly plotted. Drawing on his own memories, he recreates the wartime atmosphere of nearly seventy years ago without straying into clichés. We are therefore spared that oft-recorded fictional moment when new evacuees are gathered together and then chosen individually by their countryside hosts on the basis of how much work they might be expected to do. While this happened on occasions, it is a mistake to think it was anything like the norm. Adam, the evacuee character in this story, is in fact well treated and settles in easily.



The nub of this story is a mystery involving a dead man and a stolen picture. While this lends tension to the main plot it does lead to a rather hurried and not totally convincing dénouement towards the end. But finding a truly satisfying ending is a problem for most whodunits for children or adults, and for the most part Watson's characters come over as vivid and real. Eschewing modern theories about the novel, he is content to tell readers exactly what is happening and what everyone is thinking, more often through indirect speech than through dialogue. It is nice to read a children's story where everything is made so crystal clear. Finishing a novel for young readers on a fashionably ambiguous note is no great incentive for them to go on to other stories after that.

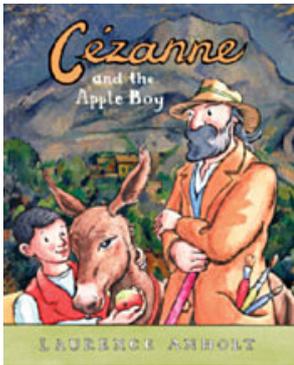
Details of daily life during this time should be fascinating for today's children while pleasantly nostalgic for adult readers. But I do envy the way that Watson's young characters twice feast off KitKats. Pedantically, these objects of so much juvenile desire were often referred to as 'chocolate crisps' at the time, and chocolate of any sort was so hard to find during those years that any shop stocking KitKats under whatever name would surely have been sold out in ten minutes. But some enviably well-supplied picnics and a talent for discovering a series of clues invisible to the local police force are the only ways that Watson sometimes strays into Enid Blyton territory. Otherwise he has written a delightful story that deserves to be read.

**Nicholas Tucker**

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*Cézanne and the Apple Boy (Anholt's Artists)*

Laurence Anholt, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb 978 1 8450 7910 9, £12.99, 2009, 32pp.



The frontispiece is a muted blue, beige and white double spread of a child on a donkey led by a man with a walking stick; they are crossing below a mountainous landscape with a house in its shadow. An inviting watercolour. The title page puzzled me with its picture-framed boy looking out at an apple, his eyes enigmatic and not really focused. In the story, the boy is seen with the same apprehensive look as he opens a letter his mother hands him while he is playing with friends. The boy is Paul Cézanne junior. The letter is from his father (the artist, also called Paul) whom he had not seen for a long time; it contains a train ticket and an invitation to join him on a painting expedition in the mountains. Paul sets out to find his father.

The story reveals the character of Cézanne as seen through his son's reactions to him, since his father has been away from home a long time. The ideas and methods of the artist are communicated through the conversations between the two of them as they travel and camp, with Cézanne stopping to paint and sometimes Paul acting as a model for him. The reactions of the people in the place where he is living and of the villagers they meet are described by both the text and the illustrations.

'I'll tell you where to find him,' said a lady. 'Half way up the mountain, painting crazy pictures!' [...]

'What have you painted today?' they snorted. 'A wonky house or a wobbly tree!'

Although the text flows well, it stretched my imagination rather when the art dealer Vollard is encountered in a remote mountain inn. It also stuck me as rather sentimental when Paul tells his father 'You are good at being a father' when Cézanne expresses his worries of having no money and being only good at painting. Also:

'Sometimes life is hard,' said Cézanne. 'But you follow your path...'

'AND AT LAST YOU REACH THE TOP!' shouted Paul.

The endpaper is a short biography of Cézanne telling how he spent much of his life in Provence near Mont St Victoire, travelling by donkey and sleeping rough. It gives details of his path to recognition as a great artist and the author thanks the artist's grandson for help with the research for the book.

The text is set out in short sentences in a clear, good-sized font that a new reader would find easy to follow. The illustrations are Cézanne like and very evocative of the story. I enjoyed the book very much but am not sure who would buy it. At the price it would have to be a gift. It is a very attractive picture book but with an unusual subject so the place of purchase might be important – a art gallery bookshop perhaps. I sense that the recipient would be someone who had seen and enjoyed a Cézanne painting – perhaps aged between six and ten years of age.

The book is part of a series – Anholt's artists – that includes *Camille and the Sunflowers* (Van Gogh), *Degas and the Little Dancer*, *Leonardo and the Flying Boy* (da Vinci), *Picasso and the Girl with a Ponytail*, *The Magical Garden of Claude Monet* and *Matisse, King of Colour*.

**Jennifer Harding**

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### ***The Thornthwaite Inheritance***

Gareth P. Jones, London: Bloomsbury, pb 978 0 7475 9982 1, £5.99, 2009, 288pp.

The Thornthwaite twins take the leading role in this brilliant tale of deception and trickery. At the time the story begins, the twins, Lorelli and Ovid, are celebrating their thirteenth birthday. They are heirs to a considerable fortune, since their parents died in strange circumstances, shortly after their birth.

Gareth Jones has already written a series of stories about The Dragon Detective Agency. During the day he works as a TV producer, writing his stories on the bus on his way home to his flat in Forest Hill, London. This latest tale is also something of a detective story: crime is at the heart of the plot. Not only do the thirteen-year-old twins have a history of murderous sibling rivalry, but they also live in a dark and gloomy mansion, which turns out to be a dangerous place in which to grow up.

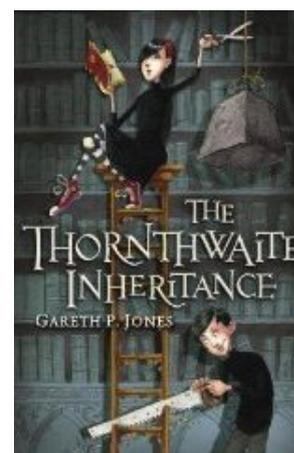
Lorelli and Ovid have never been to school. They are taught by their legal guardian and head servant, Mr Crutcher, and another member of the household staff, Nurse Griddle. By the age of thirteen they have clocked up over 200 murder attempts between them: trying to take each other's life is simply something the twins have done in their spare time.

At thirteen, the twins declare a solemn pact to trust one another from then on, which is just as well because at this point new and sinister dangers begin to threaten their lives. Suddenly they no longer know for certain which members of their household are friends or foes. Readers will soon find themselves involved in playing the role of detective alongside the twins as the story gathers momentum.

Gareth Jones's prose is precise and uncluttered, and contains plenty of humour. A series of short chapters with helpful headings move the story along at a satisfying pace. In fact the tale falls into three acts. In Act One, the scene is set and key events from the past are introduced. We get to know the twins and like them for their openness and honesty. In Act Two, more and more puzzling and scary events cause the twins to lose faith in their declared truce and begin to suspect each other of double dealing. In the final Act, Lorelli and Ovid grow up fast, and learn to take responsibility for unravelling the web of deceit that is threatening to ruin their lives and deprive them of their inheritance. Finally they discover a chilling secret that, once uncovered, will change their lives forever. Readers will need to keep their wits about them so as not to miss important clues to a number of crimes. I found this an entertaining, well-structured and satisfying read.

**Joyce Holliday**

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## REPORTS

### **Outside In ‘Reading Round the World’**

These three sessions described below have been part of a larger programme also involving talks in schools. It is to be hoped that they will be influential in the process of rendering literature from other countries better known in Britain. The website of Outside In is at [www.outsideinworld.org.uk](http://www.outsideinworld.org.uk).

#### **Pablo Bernasconi ‘In Conversation’ with John Dunne**

Brompton Library, London. Thursday, 27 August 2009.

The work of award-winning Argentinian author and illustrator Pablo Bernasconi is not very well known in this country, so this session in which he discussed his development from producing covers for the *Clarín* newspaper to creating innovative children’s books, increasingly translated into other languages, was welcome for the opportunity it provided to learn more about his art. He spoke of his early love for books which mixed text and images, and of his enthusiasm for flying which is the origin of one of his books, *Captain Arsenio’s Inventions and (Mis)adventures in Flight* (2005). His books reflect his interest in conceptual art and provide many ideas for readers to engage with. It was also interesting to learn that even though the Argentinian government is not very generous to libraries, readers have plenty of opportunities to patronise bookshops which in Buenos Aires are open twenty-four hours a day!

#### **Fridrik Erlings ‘In Conversation’ with Nicholas Tucker**

Icelandic Embassy, London. Tuesday, 1 September 2009.

The subject of translation dominated this session as Fridrik Erlings himself is the translator of his own novel *Fish in the Sky* and is therefore in an excellent position to discuss the challenges of representing one culture to another. How vivid should the depiction of an unfamiliar setting be? Erlings felt that the priority was writing a good story that would be of interest to readers everywhere. He talked about the differences between the English version and the original: ‘translating’ food was occasionally problematic but the main divergence results from the different attitudes towards the ‘cod war’ between Britain and Iceland; in the latter, this episode is regarded as a much more significant event of recent history than in Britain. Thus this element was minimised in the English translation.

#### **Ulf Stark and Julia Marshall ‘In Conversation’ with Wendy Cooling**

Swedish Embassy, London. Tuesday, 27 October 2009.

The Swedish author of forty books, which have been translated into thirty languages, was accompanied by his translator into English, who also publishes his books in New Zealand as Gecko Press. Ulf Stark’s popularity in his own country is such that *Can You Whistle, Johanna* is shown on Swedish TV every Christmas. It was suggested that his ‘Percy’ books provided a lightness in depicting ordinary life that contrasts with the darkness often associated with another Swedish writer for adults and young people, Henning Mankell. Julia Marshall spoke of her approach to translation, adapting an initial literal version to a more suitable style, but generally retaining the Swedish names.

#### **Words and Pictures: What Use Are Picture Books?**

Free Word Centre, Farringdon Road, London. Monday, 21 September 2009.

Anthony Browne, the current Children’s Laureate, was joined by two other artists, Emily Gravett and Catherine Rayner, to discuss their craft with Nicolette Jones. All three disclosed how they had taken some time to find their real ‘voice’. They emphasised the important role of picture books as art that is in the hands of children rather than on the wall. Books like these provide the first paintings that children see, and are a means of enhancing the connection between parent and child. While Browne’s childhood experience some years ago had not included much opportunity to look at picture books, both Gravett and Rayner mentioned how they had grown up loving the work of Anthony Browne.

I suspect that most of the audience had no problems with the question posed in the title of the evening, but the discussion will have reinforced their conviction about the importance of this art form. The Free Word Centre, located where *The Guardian* newsroom used to be, is a venue well worth searching out for its stimulating programme of events (see [www.freewordonline.com/events/](http://www.freewordonline.com/events/)).

### **School Librarian of the Year Award**

London Zoo, Monday. 5 October 2009.

I must admit that part of my motivation for attending this event was its location. I envisaged strolling round and visiting the animals in the autumn sunshine, but in fact it was an unpleasantly windy and rainy day, and the majority of the animals seemed to be, wisely, taking refuge inside their shelters rather than displaying themselves to visitors! Before this, however, the ceremony itself had been far more pleasurable. As usual, the work done in their schools by the shortlisted librarians was amazing – their success in devising imaginative ideas to encourage reading, their ability to co-opt enthusiastic school students on to their library teams, their ability to rebuild their libraries after disasters such as flooding, ....

I would have found it very difficult to choose a winner from the shortlist, but have no doubt that Lucy Bakewell, from Hill West Primary School in Sutton Coldfield was worthy of the accolade. In the last few years, she has been instrumental in designing, stocking and cataloguing an attractive new school library which is promoted through the school newsletter and works with the help of young librarians whom she has trained. Before the winner was announced, there were talks from Geoff Dubber, Miranda McKearney and Ginette Doyle of the School Library Association, from the sponsors of the award, and from children's author Anne Cassidy, who spoke about having herself been banned from her school library because of bad behaviour! Nevertheless, after her appetite for books had been ignited by her mother's purchases from a charity shop, she became an avid reader, and has subsequently written crime books for teenagers in the hope of encouraging particularly the 'floating' readers, as distinct from those who will always or never have a passion for books.

### **Children's Book History Society Conference 'Movables: Paper Techniques and their Use and Development in Children's Books'**

Crown Court Church of Scotland, Covent Garden, London. Saturday, 10 October 2009.

The Children's Books History Society held a fascinating day seminar on the history and development of paper techniques in children's books. The day began with a shared illustrated talk by Mike Simpkin and Rosemary Temperley, in which they demonstrated the landmarks of the more than 450 years of the history of pop-up and movable children's books, and at the same time thoroughly analysed the methods of paper engineering employed. Stills and short video clips of the books in action demonstrated each technique, from the carousels and peep shows of the pop-up to the volvelles and pull-the-tabs of the movables. Simpkin and Temperley concluded that whilst the books have often been sidelined, the ingenuity and visual qualities of the pop-up or movable give children a love of reading, improve motor skills and develop creativity.

Attendees had the opportunity to attempt their own pop-up in the afternoon, under the tuition of Robert Crowther (author of *The Most Amazing Hide-and-Seek Alphabet Book*, Viking, 1992 [new edn. Walker, 2005], and many others), and at the same time to ask questions about the practical difficulties involved in paper engineering. His workshop included showing how he makes the models initially for his books, demonstrating with examples of from his books *Cars* (Walker, 2009) and *Flight* (Walker, 2007). His work can be seen on his website [www.robertcrowtherpopsup.co.uk/](http://www.robertcrowtherpopsup.co.uk/).

The final talk of the day was given by Selwyn Goodacre, who brought and demonstrated some of his own collection of *Alice* pop-ups and movables, and who also kindly supplied attendees with a bibliography.

Further examples of pop-ups and movables were provided by attendees who had brought samples from their collections of books.

A well-attended day that was both informative and lively.

(Jenny Kendrick)

**The Open University's 40th Anniversary Lecture Series: Philip Pullman 'The Borderlands of Reading'**

The Open University, Milton Keynes. 21 October 2009

The new vice-chancellor Martin Bean introduced the lecture as 'the relationship of the story with its illustration'. I have never heard Philip Pullman deliver a lecture before and his manner of presentation combined with a fascinating thesis on the individuality of reading caused a packed hall (an oversubscribed event) to listen in rapt attention and forget to cough. He prefaced his talk with 'I am going to talk about ... this strange place, this borderland, this land along the frontier which is the space that opens up between the private mind of the reader and the book they are reading. And of course this borderland is different for every reader.' He elaborated on this idea of a borderland as a liminal state characterised by 'ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy', mentioning a passage from his *The Amber Spyglass*. His first slide showed a painting (*Precious Moment with Book*) by Gwen John of a woman reading in bed in 'perfect contentment', 'alone but not alone'. He continued with some other paintings of readers, including a print from Communist China of workers learning to read.

A survey ensued of some of the illustrated books that have been important to Pullman and in 'whose borderlands [he] loved to wander'. These included Leon Garfield's *The Pleasure Garden*, Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*, Tove Jansson's Moomin books, B.B.'s *The Little Grey Men*, the Rupert and Babar books, Richmal Crompton's William books and Eric Kastner's *Emil and the Detectives*.

Pullman then talked about two more illustrators, the first being Peter Bailey who has illustrated Pullman's fairy tales, *The Firemaker's Daughter*, *I was a Rat*, *The Scarecrow and his Servant* and his edition for the Folio Society of *Northern Lights*. The second artist he discussed is himself. On his website he says 'When I'm not writing books I like to draw' and he showed us some of the drawings of decorations for the chapter headings for his first published book. His illustrations for *Northern Lights* can be seen on his website [www.philip-pullman.com](http://www.philip-pullman.com).

His final words were on the research done by Microsoft Research on finding ways of representing text graphically by computing – 'not making pictures but putting the words themselves to work in ways that wouldn't be possible without computing power'. I watched the demonstration but couldn't be very enthusiastic about it, however Pullman was obviously fascinated by it and felt that it could lead to interesting word research on a book as a whole and be a useful tool for writers, readers and critics.

In the question session he assured a young member of the audience that the promised follow-on book about Lyra called *The Book of Dust* was on its way and adding that the making of the film *The Golden Compass* had taken up an enormous amount of time.

(Jennifer Harding)

**Garry Marvin: Wolves**

Children's Literature Research Cluster, National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, Roehampton University, London. Monday, 26 October 2009.

Garry Marvin, a social anthropologist who specialises in human-animal relationships, contends that the bad press given to wolves in so many children's stories results from the threat they posed to the human pastoral societies that had domesticated animals. Prior to that, hunter-gatherer communities seem rather to have admired than feared wolves, and indeed socially, with their monogamy, their packs made up only of family members and their nurturing of offspring, wolves are much closer to humans in social organisation even than our closer genetic relatives, chimpanzees. This negative cultural image is reflected in fairy tales, Aesop (where wolves are generally threatening rather than bad) and, notably, the Bible. There are many stories however where wolves play a nurturing role, and it is to be hoped that the late twentieth century has seen something of a change of attitude, in both literature and ecology.

### **Launch of website Perform-a-Poem**

National Theatre, London. Tuesday, 5 November 2009.

One of the initiatives that Michael Rosen inspired when he was Children's Laureate was the setting up of this e-safe site for children's poetry performances [www.performapoem.lgfl.net](http://www.performapoem.lgfl.net) in conjunction with the London Grid for Learning. It has a list of suitable material and a search facility, and should prove immensely encouraging to teachers and pupils who are developing an interest in poetry. The launch at the National Theatre was followed by a typically energetic performance of his own poems in the Cottesloe auditorium – fully involving the child audience who loved every moment. Now that such performances, by children and by Michael Rosen himself, are available on the website, it is to be hoped that performance of their own poems will become a norm for school students!

### ***P is for Poland***

Polish Embassy, London. Thursday, 5 November 2009.

This book by Prodeepa Das and Agnieszka Mrowczynska, published by Frances Lincoln (see review in *IBBYLink* 24), was celebrated by the Polish Cultural Institute with a reception at which Prodeepa Das acknowledged the enormous contribution that Poland has made, and he testified to the importance of all the art forms that bring children together (an aim that reminded me of the vision that led Jella Lepman to found IBBY after the Second World War).

### **Roald Dahl Funny Prize**

Unicorn Theatre, Bloomsbury, London. Tuesday 10 November 2009.

This was the second year of this award and, as before, the children from two schools (also strongly represented in the lively audience) had been invited to give their presentations about the books on the two shortlists. Both videos were excellent – the audience was particularly impressed by the way that children from Wivelsfield Primary School posed as solemn-faced judges, having clearly imbibed the right mannerisms from TV.

In the 0–6 age group, irreverence, creativity in both text and picture, and wit, were evident in all the books: Peter Bently and Mei Matsuoka's *The Great Dog Bottom Swap* (now I know the reason why dogs always smell the behinds of other dogs!); Nick Sharratt's *Octopus Socktopus*; David Wojtowycz's *Elephant Joe is a Spaceman*; Sean Taylor and Hannah Shaw's *Crocodiles are the Best Animals of All*; Allan Ahlberg (good to see him on the shortlist) and Bruce Ingman's *The Pencil*; and the winner, Sam Lloyd's *Mr Pusskins Best in Show*.

For the 7–14 age group, another veteran, Hilda Offen, was represented by *The Galloping Ghost*, while it was also good to note Anne Fine's *Eating Things on Sticks* (illus. Kate Aldous). Others on the shortlist were David Walliams' *The Boy in the Dress* (illus. Quentin Blake), Andy Mulligan's *Ribblestrop*, and the winner, Philip Ardagh's *Grubtown Tales: Stinking Rich and Just Plain Stinky* (illus. Jim Paillot). In presenting the prizes, Michael Rosen, whose brainchild this award has been, talked of how ideas have changed from the old perception that books with good plots shouldn't have jokes.

### **Eleanor Farjeon Award**

Penguin, The Strand, London. Tuesday 17 November 2009.

IBBY had a particular interest in this award ceremony, since the international aspect of the organisation was among the seven shortlisted individuals and groups, which also included Anne Marley (Hampshire Library Service), Gill and John McLay (literary scouts), the Unicorn Theatre, the Reading Agency, Ros Bartlett of the Federation of Children's Book Groups, and the winner, Moira Arthur of Peters' Library Services. Anne Harvey spoke particularly of Naomi Lewis, a good friend of Eleanor Farjeon, who died recently, and of the continuing interest taken in Farjeon's work. David Fickling pointed out the excellent but underfunded work of all the nominees, and proposed that publishers owed so much to the enthusiasm and commitment of such people and organisations that they should be prepared to set up a 'best-sellers' foundation to help

fund them all – though he wasn't sure how much enthusiasm for the idea would be felt by his fellow publishers! Peter Sheldon, a colleague at Peters of Moira Arthur, read a poem he had composed for her recent retirement, and then she gave an account of how she had learned on the job about the books most appropriate for the various libraries that are their customers. Occasions such as these reveal how many people there are in the world of children's literature whose commitment is invaluable to the process of encouraging children to read.

### **Booktrust Teenage Prize**

Penguin, The Strand, London. Wednesday 18 November 2009.

Having been at the Penguin building until late evening on Tuesday, I was there again at midday on Wednesday for this award, of which the teenage judges are such an important part. There, with their proud parents (since attaining judge status is a very demanding process, involving a substantial piece of writing as well as all the reading), they were given the opportunity to interview the shortlisted authors: Paul Dowsell (*Auslander*), Keith Gray (*The Ostrich Boys*), Patrick Ness (*The Ask and the Answer*, a sequel to his last year's winner), Jenny Valentine (*The Ant Colony*), Helen Grant (*The Vanishing of Katharina Linden*) and Neil Gaiman, whose *The Graveyard Book*, illustrated by Chris Riddell, was the winner. The four adult and five teenage judges (including one retained from last year) were apparently unanimous in their choice, paying particular praise to the quality of Gaimon's prose.

My only regret from these two splendid occasions at Penguin was that the inclement weather meant that the balcony doors were locked so access to one of the best views over the river was only possible through the windows!

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Conferences

#### **Nationalism(s) and Cultural Memory in Texts of Childhood**

University of Worcester. April 2010.

This proposed collection of essays, associated with a conference to be held in 2010 at the University of Worcester, UK, will be concerned with the ways in which cultural memory is shaped, contested, forgotten, recovered, and (re)circulated, sometimes in opposition to dominant national narratives, featuring young characters and/or targeting young readers who are often assumed not to possess any prior cultural memory. Submissions that examine the circulation of such texts across national borders are particularly welcomed. Enquiries to Benjamin Lefebvre, [ben@roomofbensown.net](mailto:ben@roomofbensown.net).

#### **Children's Literature and Translation**

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Tunghai University, Taichung City 40704, Taichung Harbor Road Section 3 No. 181, Taiwan. 15 May 2010.

Proposals (500 words) are invited for papers and panel discussions on topics such as translation of visual texts, publication of dual language texts, translating 'classics', translations to and from minority/community languages, the relationship between culture and translation, etc. Details from Mieke Desmet, [mdesmet@thu.edu.tw](mailto:mdesmet@thu.edu.tw), or see [www2.thu.edu.tw/~fild/](http://www2.thu.edu.tw/~fild/).

#### **Childhood**

Mansfield College, Oxford. Saturday 3 July – Monday 5 July 2010.

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to explore all aspects of childhood, which is viewed quite differently in different cultures and in different historical eras. Further information from David White, Department of Philosophy, University of Calgary, Canada, [dmw@inter-disciplinary.net](mailto:dmw@inter-disciplinary.net), and Rob Fisher, [child@inter-disciplinary.net](mailto:child@inter-disciplinary.net). All papers accepted for and presented at this conference will be published in an ebook, and may also be published in a themed hard-copy volume. For further details see [www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/persons/childhood/](http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/persons/childhood/).

#### **Changing A-Genders in Children's Literature**

University of Hertfordshire. 9–10 July 2010.

This is the next conference of the International Research Society for Children's Literature. Keynote speakers are Meg Rossoff and Babette Cole. Proposals (250 words) for papers on such topics as the depiction of gender in comics, children's fiction, picture books, graphic novels, school stories, etc. should be sent to Jenny Plastow ([j.j.plastow@herts.ac.uk](mailto:j.j.plastow@herts.ac.uk)) by 31 March 2010. Further details are on the website [www.herts.ac.uk/events/Changing-agenders-in-childrens-literature.cfm](http://www.herts.ac.uk/events/Changing-agenders-in-childrens-literature.cfm).

#### **The Emergent Adult: Adolescent Literature and Culture**

The Cambridge/Homerton Research and Teaching Centre. 3–5 September 2010.

All papers will be circulated prior to the conference and will be considered for subsequent publication. Confirmed keynote speakers: Shirley Brice Heath and Meg Rosoff. Papers are welcome on any topic relevant to representations and realities of young adults. Abstract of 250 words and a 2–3 sentence biography should be sent to Ewa Illakowicz, [ei219@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ei219@cam.ac.uk), by 1 February 2010. Full papers will be required by 1 July 2010.

The conference fee of £320 includes college accommodation (single en-suite rooms, see <http://www.homertonconference.com/> for details), two breakfasts, morning and afternoon refreshments, two buffet lunches and two three-course waiter served dinners. Non-residential fee of £120 includes two lunches and refreshments.

For further inquiries contact Maria Nikolajeva, [mn351@cam.ac.uk](mailto:mn351@cam.ac.uk), or telephone Ewa Illakowicz on 01223 767594. For further details see [talks.cam.ac.uk/talk/index/21253](http://talks.cam.ac.uk/talk/index/21253).

### **Children and War: Past and Present**

University of Salzburg, Austria. 30 September – 2 October 2010.

An international multidisciplinary conference. It is intended to publish a selection of the conference papers. Further details from Helga Embacher (University of Salzburg) and Dieter Steinert (University of Wolverhampton). Details of call for papers at <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/termine/id=12453>.

### **C.S. Lewis, his Friends and Associates: Questions of Identity**

Lille Catholic University, France, 2 and 3 June 2011.

Proposals for papers (200–300 words) to Suzanne Bray ([suzanne.bray@icl-lille.fr](mailto:suzanne.bray@icl-lille.fr)) by 15 June 2010. Details of call for papers are at <http://cslewisblog.com/?p=372>.

### **Other Items**

#### **The (Im)possibility of Children's Fiction: Jacqueline Rose 25 Years on**

Jacqueline Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* first appeared in 1984, at a time when the study of children's literature was just beginning to take off in academic departments. It was a formidable gauntlet, lauded by some, castigated by others, and misunderstood by many, but it has more than stood the test of time. Twenty-five years on, it is still one of the most quoted books in children's literature criticism.

A special issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* in Fall 2010 will be devoted to a reconsideration of Rose's 'case'. Papers have been invited on any aspect of her thesis and the selected articles will appear in that issue.

#### **Stephen Spender Prize 2010**

This annual award is for a translation of a poem in any language, classical or modern, into English. Entrants must be British residents or British citizens. The Stephen Spender Memorial Trust, which administers the prize, encourages submissions from children who are British residents but have roots in other countries. There are three prizes in the 18 and under category and one prize in the 14 and under category. The closing date for submissions is Friday, 28 May 2010. Further information is at [www.stephen-spender.org](http://www.stephen-spender.org) and enquiries should be sent to [info@stephenspender.org](mailto:info@stephenspender.org).

(Robina Pelham Burn)

#### ***Bookbird***

*Bookbird* is the journal of IBBY international. It is a peer reviewed journal and is published quarterly in January, April, July and October. Special issues in 2010 are to be published on the topics of graphic novels and poetry. The editors invite manuscripts for submission by 1 August 2010 on poetry. (The deadline for manuscripts on graphic novels was 1 January 2010.) The poetry issue will examine poetry for young people through various cultural perspectives as well as from an international perspective. The editors hope that the issue will look at what is unique to particular cultures and what is universal to the imagery, music and multiple forms of contemporary poetry for young people. Articles (max. 3000 words) should be emailed to both editors: Cathy Kurkjian ([kurkjianc@comcast.net](mailto:kurkjianc@comcast.net)) and Sylvia Vardell ([SVardell@twu.edu](mailto:SVardell@twu.edu)) with 'Bookbird submission', followed by your initials, in the subject line.

To subscribe to *Bookbird*, see [www.ibby.org/index.php?id=297](http://www.ibby.org/index.php?id=297).

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## NEWS

### Waterstone's Illustration Award 'Picture This'

'Picture This' is Waterstone's and Macmillan Children's Books search for an unpublished illustrator to work with picture-book author Julia Donaldson – writer of *The Gruffalo*, *The Princess and the Wizard* and *Tyrannosaurus Drip*. The prize is the opportunity to illustrate Julia Donaldson's book *Freddie, the Fairy and the Fairy Queen*, to be published in the autumn of 2010.

Karen George, an undiscovered illustrator from London and a graduate of the Royal College of Art, has been named the winner of this competition. The announcement was made by Julia Donaldson on 21 September 2009 at the Bath Festival of Children's Literature.

The text to be illustrated can be seen at [www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/navigate.do?pPageID=1789](http://www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/navigate.do?pPageID=1789).

### The Times Stephen Spender Prize

This prize is for a translation from any language, classical or modern, into English of a poem chosen by the entrant. There are three classes: 14 and under, 18 and under, and open. The winners of the 2009 prizes were announced on 31 October 2009. A free booklet of the winning entries of the 2009 prizes is now available from [info@stephenspender.org](mailto:info@stephenspender.org). The poems can be read online at [www.stephen-spender.org](http://www.stephen-spender.org).

I am amazed at the insight of the young translators into the originals and their inventiveness in their translated versions.

The under-14 prize went to Johanna Reimann-Dubbers for her translation from French of Jean de la Fontaine's 'La Cigale et la fourmi'. Here is the first verse for you to compare with your own translation of the French.

#### La Cigale et la fourmi

La Cigale, ayant chanté  
Tout l'été,  
Se trouva fort dépourvue  
Quand la bise fut venue:  
Pas un seul petit morceau  
De mouche ou de vermisseau.

#### The Cricket and the Ant

The cricket having sung her song  
all summer long  
found her provisions too few  
when the icy winds blew.  
Nowhere could she spy  
a single morsel of worm or fly.

The under-18 prize went to Naomi Ackerman for her translation from ancient Greek of 'The Funeral of Hector, Horse-Tamer' from Homer's *The Iliad* XXIV lines 782–804. Here is the first verse.

ὣς ἔφαθ', οἳ δ' ὑπ' ἀμάξῃσιν βόας  
ἠμιόνους τε

And so he spoke, and they yoked oxen  
and mules to their wagons,

ζεύγυσαν, αἴψα δ' ἔπειτα πρὸ ἄστεος  
ἠγερέθοντο.

And then they gathered with speed  
before the city.

ἐννῆμαρ μὲν τοί γε ἀγίνεον ἄσπετον  
ὔλην:

For nine days indeed they brought a store  
of wood beyond measure.

I am unable to comment on her translation as I know no ancient Greek. But I did try a translation of one of the commended submissions by Saskia Volhard Dearman which is a translation from Spanish of Pablo Neruda's 'Oda a las flores de la costa'. Here is the first verse.

### Oda a las flores de la costa

Han abierto las flores  
silvestres de Isla Negra,  
no tienen nombre, algunas  
paracen azahares de la arena,  
otras  
encienden  
en el suelo un relámpago amarillo.

### Ode to Coastal Flowers

The flowers of the Isla Negra  
have opened,  
nameless and wild.  
Some  
seem to blossom from the sand,  
others  
ignite the soil  
with a citric spark.

(Jennifer Harding)

### Nominees for the IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2010

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 33 countries have sent in their selections, submitting 29 authors and 27 illustrators as candidates for the 2010 Hans Christian Andersen awards. The British section of IBBY has put forward David Almond for the author award and Michael Foreman for the illustrator award.

The winners will be announced at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in March 2010 and the awards will be presented later that year at the IBBY World Congress in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark is patron of these awards.

David Almond came to prominence with the publication of *Skellig* (1998) which became a best-selling book and later a play, an opera and, most recently, a film. Born in the north-east of England, he became a teacher but always wanted to be a writer. His initial success came with writing stories for adults, but with the publication of *Skellig*, a new seam of writing opened up that saw him explore his own childhood and its locale. Many of his novels and short stories are aimed at older children, however he has recently published two books for younger children, with illustrators Polly Dunbar and Dave McKean, respectively.

Michael Foreman has written and illustrated more than 50 of his own books, in addition to illustrating more than 150 books by other writers. Born in Suffolk, he grew up there during the Second World War. This had a lasting and creative influence on his work, most notably on his semi-autobiographical novels *War Boy* (1989), *After the War Was Over* (1995) and his latest book *A Child's Garden* (2009). He has travelled widely and has used the sketches he made during these travels to great effect in *Mia's Story* (2006), set in South America, as well as in a number of fairy-tale collections from around the world.

An extensive dossier is sent to the international jury with each nomination. It includes a biography, bibliography, critical appraisal and list of the ten most significant titles, plus reviews, for the jury to consider.

The ten titles listed for David Almond are:

*Clay* (Hodder, 2005); *Counting Stars* (Hodder, 2000); *The Fire Eaters* (Hodder, 2003); *Heaven Eyes* (Hodder, 2000); *Jackdaw Summer* (Hodder, 2008); *Kit's Wilderness* (Hodder, 1999); *My Dad's a Birdman* (illus. Polly Dunbar, Walker Books, 2007); *The Savage* (illus. Dave McKean, Walker Books, 2008); *Skellig* (Hodder, 1998); *Wild Girl, Wild Boy: A Play* (Hodder, 2002).

The ten titles listed for Michael Foreman are:

*Beowulf* (Walker Books, 2006); *A Child's Garden* (Walker Books, 2009); *Classic Fairy Tales* (Chrysalis, 2005); *Mia's Story* (Walker Books, 2006); *Michael Foreman's Playtime Rhymes* (Walker Books, 2002); *Say Hello* (Walker Books, 2007); *Seal Surfer* (Andersen Press, 1996); *War and Peas* (Andersen Press, 1974); *War Boy* (Pavilion Books, 1989); *Wonder Goal* (Andersen Press, 2004).

### **The Story Museum, Oxford**

The Story Museum has recently acquired a city-centre site, Rochester House and associated buildings in Pembroke Street, Oxford. The next step will be to raise the money to transform these beautiful but dilapidated buildings into a centre for stories and storytelling, to open by 2014. Meanwhile, programmes will still be offered in schools and communities. See [www.storymuseum.org.uk](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk) for more information. Tel: 01865 790050.

### **Costa Book Awards 2009**

One of the five categories is a children's book. The Costa Book Awards started in 1971 as the Whitbread Literary Awards and then as the Whitbread Book Awards. The awards are open to writers based in the UK and Ireland. The award winners were announced on 5 January 2010. The winner of the children's book section is Patrick Ness' *The Ask and the Answer* (Chaos Walking 2), Walker, 2009. The 2009 Costa Book of the Year will be announced on 26 January 2010. A children's book has once been the Book of the Year – *The Amber Spyglass* (His Dark Materials 3) by Philip Pullman, in 2001.

The following were on the shortlist.

Siobhan Dowd, *Solace of the Road*, David Ficking Books, 2009.

Mary Hoffman, *Troubadour*, Bloomsbury, 2009.

Patrick Ness, *The Ask and the Answer* (Chaos Walking 2), Walker, 2009.

Anna Perera, *Guantanamo Boy*, Puffin, 2009.

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## IBBY NEWS

Many sections produce their own newsletter to share with their national members. Recent issues are available from IBBY South Africa: [www.ibbysa.org.za](http://www.ibbysa.org.za); IBBY Ireland: [www.ibbyireland.ie](http://www.ibbyireland.ie); and IBBY Australia: [www.ibby.org/Australia](http://www.ibby.org/Australia).

### **IBBY Executive Committee meeting, September 2008**

The committee met in Shah Alam just outside Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia for two long days of discussions.

### **IBBY Yamada workshop programme 2010**

Projects submitted by the IBBY sections of Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, Peru and Zambia were accepted. IBBY France will run a three-week training course for a librarian from Burkina Faso under the IBBY-Yamada scholarship scheme.

### **IBBY Children in Crisis**

These projects are progressing. A new project was accepted from IBBY Indonesia to bring relief to the children of Padang in Sumatra after the devastating earthquake in August 2009, further funding is by the IBBY-Yamada fund. The workshop in Turkey to discuss the reading culture in Afghanistan was discussed and the report is on the IBBY website under the Children in Crisis programme. Donations to the IBBY programme were announced from Deborah Ellis, Rukhsana Khan, Merle Harris, Christina Minaki and Katherine Paterson. We gratefully acknowledge their generous support.

### **Hans Christian Andersen 2010 Awards**

The jury will meet in Basel on 13 and 14 March 2010. The shortlist has been released and the winners will be announced at the IBBY press conference at the Bologna Book Fair on Monday, 23 March 2010.

### **IBBY World Congress 2010**

A forza das minorías/La fuerza de las minorías/The Strength of Minorities

See [www.ibbycompostela2010.org](http://www.ibbycompostela2010.org) for the latest news. Register and pay before 30 April 2010 to get a discount of 10%.

### **Prizes and Awards**

#### **IBBY Turkey's Best Books of the Year Awards**

Since 2004 the Turkish section of IBBY has chosen the best books of the year to encourage writers, illustrators and publishers for children. In celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of Turkish IBBY a special category was introduced for the best children's poetry book of the last fifteen years. The awards were presented to the winners at the Istanbul Book Fair on 8 November 2009. See [www.ibby.org/index.php?id=1001](http://www.ibby.org/index.php?id=1001) for the list of selected books.

#### **Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis 2009 – German Youth Literature Award 2009**

Given annually by the German section of IBBY with support from the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend.

The 2009 awards were announced during the Frankfurt Book Fair on Thursday, 16 October. This year's special award for her complete works went to illustrator Jutta Bauer. The full list of winners can be found at [www.jugendliteratur.org](http://www.jugendliteratur.org).

#### **BIB'09**

Spanish illustrator Josep Antoni Tássies Penella won the 2009 Grand Prix. For the full results see [www.bibiana.sk](http://www.bibiana.sk).

#### **Premio Iberoamericano SM de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil**

The winner of the 2009 Premio is María Teresa Andruetto from Argentina. Press release: [www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Boletin\\_V\\_premio\\_IB\\_21102009\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Boletin_V_premio_IB_21102009_1_.pdf).

### **3rd Tallinn Illustration Triennial: The Power of Pictures**

Press release:

[http://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PRESS\\_RELEASE\\_The\\_winner\\_of\\_the\\_Grand\\_Prix\\_of\\_the\\_Illustrations\\_Triennial.pdf](http://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PRESS_RELEASE_The_winner_of_the_Grand_Prix_of_the_Illustrations_Triennial.pdf).

### **Alida Cutts Lifetime Membership Awards**

Two recipients were honoured at the recent 8th IBBY regional conference in St Charles, IL, USA. Anne Pellowski and Katherine Paterson were honoured for their long commitment to children's literature.

### **Prix TD 2009 de littérature canadienne pour l'enfance et la jeunesse**

For *Chère Traudi* by Anne Villeneuve. Press release:

[www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Canada\\_Comm\\_Laureat\\_PrixTD09VF.pdf](http://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Canada_Comm_Laureat_PrixTD09VF.pdf)

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**IBBY/NCRCL MA Annual Conference 2010**

Froebel College, Roehampton University. Saturday 13 November 2010.

The topic of the conference is as yet undecided.

Contact Laura Atkins, l.atkins@roehampton.ac.uk for further information.

The next issue of *IBBYLink* (Summer 2010) (copydate 30 April 2010) will be titled 'Wars and Conflicts'. Articles on all types of conflict, not just those of war, including non-physical conflicts, and all aspects of war throughout the world as reflected in children's literature are invited.

The Autumn 2010 issue of *IBBYLink* will be titled 'Australia' (copydate 31 July 2010). Articles on all aspects of Australian children's literature are invited, including considerations of earlier settler life and the colonial heritage; aboriginal written languages, folklore and dreamtime stories; bush life and the home education of some children; national and state collections; Australian book numbers cf. UK and US imports; recent immigration (e.g. Asian and boat people) and its effects on children's literature.

Articles on other subjects, reviews, reports, information about conferences and similar items are also welcomed for both issues. Contributions to PatPinsent@aol.com.

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Editor: Pat Pinsent, 23 Burcott Road, Purley CR8 4AD

Associate editor: Jennifer Harding

To sponsor a future issue of *IBBYLink*, contact PatPinsent@aol.com.

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