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## Editorial *by Pat Pinsent*

The annual British IBBY Conference held at Roehampton in November, which had the theme of Children's Literature and Childhood in Performance, attracted the usual large number of participants. We are fortunate that most of those who spoke, either at plenary sessions or in the workshops, have been able to let us have short versions of their talks, and these are reproduced in this issue. Although these summaries cannot do justice either to the talks themselves (in particular their visual illustrations) or to the atmosphere, including the questions and comments of listeners, they perhaps serve in a small way to show how exciting these contributions were, and to entice those who haven't yet been to an IBBY conference to book in good time for next November! Some papers, notably that of Aidan Chambers, recent Hans Christian Andersen Award winner, were by their nature more appropriate to the spoken form than to a written synopsis, but were thoroughly enjoyed at the time. One or two others have been delayed and may well appear in the next issue. It is also likely that a book containing the fuller versions will be published later—we shall keep you informed about that!

The conference provides ample evidence of the vigour and enthusiasm of the British section of IBBY, and this has also been displayed abroad. Ann Lazim

(Chair of British IBBY), Pam Robson and Nikki Gamble went to the IBBY International Congress last year in Basel, Switzerland. Ann's account reveals how significant British IBBY, since its revival during the 1990s, has become on the international front. As well as putting forward successful nominees for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, and making a bid (unfortunately less successful) to hold the Congress here in 2008, the British section has initiated a rethink about the question of the nature of national representation.

Despite all our achievements, however, our numbers remain all too few! If you are reading this, the chances are that you are already a member. If so, then please encourage your friends to join! If you are not, then please consider joining yourself! Membership expenditure is offset by the three mailings of *IBBYlink* during the year, and paying at a cheaper rate for the November conference, while members have the reward of knowing that they are thinking of children's literature from an international perspective rather than just being insular! Members also have the chance to make recommendations for the Hans Andersen Award, the IBBY Honour Books, and the Laureateship, and are very welcome to get involved in any IBBY activities put on for International Children's Book Day.

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## The Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation, 2003 *by Pat Pinsent*

The Arts Club in Piccadilly hosted the reception at which this biennial prize was presented by David Almond to one of the most distinguished of contemporary translators of children's books, Anthea Bell, for her translation of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *Where were you, Robert?* (Puffin). In this book, Robert travels through time and space, learning about life and history on his way, so that as well as the main plot there is a series of short narratives. Story within story is a feature too of another shortlisted book, also translated by Bell, Reinhardt Jung's *Bambert's Book of Missing Stories* (Egmont); the other listed novels were Lene Kaaberbol's translation of her own book, *The Shamer's Daughter* (Hodder), Lance Salway's translation of Ted van Lieshout's *Brothers* (Collins), and Sarah Adams' translation of Daniel Pennac's *Dog* (Walker Books). I've read four of the five books, including the winner, and would like to add my own witness to the quality of the translations.

In his presentation speech, David Almond commented that child readers don't yet know that foreign books are often supposed to be difficult, while as a northerner, he had often felt that he himself has almost been regarded in the south as a foreigner. In her acceptance, Anthea Bell pointed out that if children are to have the chance of reading the books at the right age, good translations are essential. She read a short passage from the novel, and also quoted how translators had been described as 'the aristocratic coolies of the literary world.' An encouraging note was her revelation that during the last two years she has been asked to translate more children's fiction than previously she had during the last two decades.

In our emphasis on international children's literature, IBBY has cause to be grateful to the Marsh Christian Trust, which sponsors the award, the Arts Council which subsidises it, the publishers who are fostering this area- and to the excellent translators who are ensuring that the books are attractive to English speaking children.

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# Report on the Jubilee IBBY Congress 2002

by Ann Lazim

**The Jubilee Congress in Basel, Switzerland celebrating 50 years of IBBY, was an exciting and an interesting one at which to be a British delegate.** It was the first time that both UK nominees for the Hans Christian Andersen Medals had won at the same time, and the presentation of these awards is always a high point of the congress. This time the ceremony took place on the first evening, in the presence of Empress Michiko of Japan and Suzanne Mubarak, the wife of Egypt's President. Aidan Chambers received his medal on this occasion, but unfortunately Quentin Blake was unable to be there. I had the honour of being asked to receive the award on his behalf. Quentin sent a video of his acceptance speech which was very well received, especially as it showed him drawing some of his well known characters.

The excitement of this glittery occasion followed a disappointment for the British delegation. As readers of *IBBYLink* will know, we put forward a bid to hold the congress in Newcastle in 2008. Denmark also put in a bid and, sadly for us, theirs was the one chosen by the IBBY executive. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Nikki Gamble for all the excellent work she put into preparing and presenting our bid. We intend to turn this into something positive and plan a programme incorporating some of the ideas and contacts made during this process. I'd also like to congratulate the Danish section and I look forward to visiting Copenhagen in 2008. The locations of the next four congresses have now been decided—South Africa 2004, China 2006, Denmark 2008, Spain 2010.

Each IBBY congress has its own character according to where it is held, and some of the memories I'll have of this congress are: riding Basel's trams, the trip to Lucerne (where I got separated from

my group and ended going up and down the same side of the mountain and doing the boat trip twice!), and the picture book exhibition which introduced me to some fascinating books and made me see some familiar ones in new ways. Another highlight was an informal visit to the office of Baobab books who are very proactive in publishing children's literature in translation from around the world. The exhibitions at the congress centre were excellent. They included the 2002 Honour List and a display of selected titles by all the past winners of the Hans Andersen awards. I only wish I'd had more time to spend looking at them—there was so much going on and so many interesting people to talk to.

The theme of this congress was 'Children's Books. A Worldwide Challenge'. A number of delegates were concerned that not all countries in the world are being allowed to play a full part in IBBY. The British section, with strong support from Irish IBBY and the encouragement of many others, proposed a motion to the General Assembly about the right of Palestine to form a national section. Although the IBBY statutes say that a country or nation may form a national section, unwritten policy has meant that only 'sovereign states' recognised by the United Nations have been admitted. The motion was passed but the matter has gone back to the executive to resolve. We trust that when they next meet in April at Bologna, Palestine will be admitted as a national section.

IBBY had a lot of achievements to celebrate at its Jubilee Congress and its success was largely due to the hard work of IBBY's Executive Director, Leena Maissen and her assistant, Liz Page. Leena will be retiring in April and she will be a very hard act to follow.

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## 'But Why? But Why? But Why?'

### Storytelling and Performance in New Drama for Children by Adrienne Scullion

Theatre for children and young people often tells stories in which children are the main protagonists and which focus on childhood experiences or reflect on what it is to be a child by considering how children engage with and are part of the world, and assessing how the world deals with children. Yet this same sector (unlike pantomimes, musicals and the occasional 'adult' play with a role for a child) tends not to employ child actors. What, then, are the theatrical (performative) and dramaturgical (narrative) choices made in order to perform the child and his/her story?

Most commonly, productions use an adult play the child. As David Wood suggests, there are many advantages in this strategy—not least the ability of the adult to interpret the subtextual meanings of the playtext.

A second technique to represent the child draws on traditions of fairy tales and children's prose and might be labelled anthropomorphism; that is the use of objects and animals to represent the child on stage. Such solutions—for example Visible Fiction's *Red Balloon* (1997) and Catherine Wheels' *Martha* (1999)—are often predicated on puppetry. In each of these examples the child is represented metaphorically, respectively by the red balloon and a mischievous goose.

**IBBY Jubilee**

**Ann Lazim**

**Storytelling and Performance**

**Adrienne Scullion**

# “Children Will See”

## Performing the Child's Gaze in Three Film Versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

by Susanne Greenhalgh

This paper sought, within the broader context of changing constructions of childhood, to contribute to the theorisation of the child performer; a surprisingly under-investigated subject within the field of theatre and performance studies, compared with the body of work within film studies. To this end, three film versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were compared, all of which derive from, or have strong associations with, theatrical production. These are Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle's Hollywood interpretation of Reinhardt's theatre production made for Warner Brothers in 1935, Adrian Noble's film of his theatre production for the RSC (1996), which draws strongly on the imagery of the 'Golden Age' of children's literature in England, and Christine Edzard's 2001 film *The Children's 'Midsummer Night's Dream'*, set in a miniature marionette theatre with a cast drawn entirely from children at seven primary schools in South London.

Traditionally the child in film has most often been regarded as 'a sheer capability of gazing' (Jousse in Vallet, 1991: p.115); as a figuration of adult perception and of the cinematic gaze itself. Following Freud, that projection is most frequently seen as one issuing from, compensating for, or re-enacting, a traumatic past or present, 'bound up with secrecy, with fear, and thus with childhood' (Jousse in Vallet, p.115). Comparative analysis of film texts in which performance and theatricality are key referents opens the way to a concept of young performers which does not situate them simply as figures of adult fantasy, and of a child gaze which is other than marked by trauma. It is argued that, in addition to the emphasis on theatricality, the films' different constructions of child performance is in part the outcome of their different uses of gendered representation and of the 'amateur' as opposed to 'professional' child actor. Whereas the Reinhardt/Dieterle and Noble versions most often focus the cinematic gaze through young males presented as both precociously knowing and voyeuristic (Puck, as played by Mickey Rooney, and the Boy whom Noble inserts as a frame to the action of Shakespeare's play), Edzard's film presents an audience of school children who, on Hermia's line, 'I would my father looked but with my eyes,' (I.i.1.56), become actors, not simply 'auditors', of an adult script; a girl-led rejection of the adult gaze

which also responds to what Ian Wojcik-Andrews has termed the 'duality of children's film', the way it is addressed both to adult and child audiences, deconstructing 'the notion of the innocent child within the film but also the innocent child within the audience' (Wojcik-Andrews, 2000: p. 218). The films' cinematic conventions and choices of mise en scene also point to diverse ideological constructions of childhood and consequently different employments and empowerments of the child performers. Reinhardt's Grimm-like evocation of 'vicious and nightmarish childhood' (Collick, 1986: p. 86) combines with the new associations of film animation to produce a 'wild child'-cum-'juvenile hoodlum' figure in Mickey Rooney's highly experienced and dynamic Puck, which encapsulates an exuberant appropriation of European theatricality by the young technologies and conventions of American cinema. Noble's Edwardian setting and the portrayal of the Boy as a kind of junior Prospero, creating his own world of magical fantasy, nostalgically references not only the children's literature of the period, especially theatre productions of 'Peter Pan', but the authorial—and

authorising—Freudian 'family romance' at the heart of many film auteurs' works, perhaps most explicitly those of Ingmar Bergman. Edzard employs time-lapse and jump shots to transpose her child performers from the social realities of a multicultural and disadvantaged area of 21<sup>st</sup> century London into an intricately costumed and closeted theatre world derived from Elizabethan portrait miniatures and the conventions of 'high art' puppetry to stage an 'unabbreviated' version of the play. The illusion of children 'in command' of a mode of theatrical performance conventionally viewed as challenging and difficult even for experienced adult actors is paradoxically enabled by the nature of performance in film, based on short takes. Journalistic insistence, in accounts of the project, on the 'disturbed' nature of some of the child participants and debate about theatre's 'therapeutic' qualities, together with some reviewers' outraged rejection of any merit in this 'school play', also invite closer interrogation of Edzard's conception of 'personalities, as yet untampered with' as paradigm for the child performer. Finally, reference to Anthony B. Dawson's recent reconsideration of the 'representational power' of boy players' performance in Shakespeare's theatre (Dawson in Dawson and Yachnin, 2001: p.37) provided a means to summarise some of the implications of my discussion for further considerations of the child performer, and the value of cross-media and cross-cultural analysis for future work in this area.

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**“The films' cinematic conventions also point to diverse ideological constructions of childhood”**

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**Children Will See**

**Susanne Greenhalgh**

# The Storyteller in Children's Fiction

by Pat Pinsent

Storyteller

Pat Pinsent

Story exerts a very powerful spell upon its hearers, moving the emotions of both adults and children, and consequently helping listeners to remember both the events narrated and any moral message they may enshrine. Storytellers have been therefore vitally important throughout the ages, especially in preserving the traditions and history of non-literate societies. Written literature contains many depictions of oral storytellers, including such notable instances as *One Thousand and One Nights* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, but many of the more recent examples are by no means always endowed by their authors with the kind of language that would in truth have held captive an audience. Sometimes the device of having a storyteller seems to be there to attract young readers by making them feel that they are listening to a voice, but there may be a variety of more pragmatic reasons for their presence, such as disclosing details of the plot to characters who might not otherwise know them.

In addition to signalling in the text that a storyteller is speaking, novelists may make what is told appear authentically oral if they endeavour to incorporate into their narrative some of the characteristics of oral language. Walter Ong in *Orality and Literacy* (1982) suggests that these include the use of formulae (we naturally think of 'once upon a time', and 'they all lived happily ever after') and repetition, stereotypical characters, poetic devices such as rhythm, alliteration and rhyme, and a style which makes more use of 'and', 'but' and 'then' than more complex links. The supposed hearer is likely to be addressed as 'you', and encouraged to imagine how the events that happened affected the physical senses and the emotions of the characters. Whereas print-dependent societies like ours tend to fear plagiarism, the oral storyteller is likely to make use of many previous authorities but unlikely to name them other than in the most general terms.

There is thus an inevitable tension between orality itself and the conveying of it in written narrative. Looking at a range of children's books reveals a variety of ways of resolving, or failing to resolve, this tension. Some novels such as Anne Fine's *Goggle-eyes*, Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* and Nina

Bawden's *Carrie's War* purport to be almost entirely told by one character to another, but the techniques of oral storytelling do not appear to be very strongly present in these otherwise gripping and sustained narratives. Another approach is for novels to have inserted tales which may or may not attempt to make these appear as if they were really spoken. Frances Browne, who wrote *Granny's Wonderful Chair*, is an example of the former, perhaps because she was blind and concerned about orality, as well as inheriting an Irish storytelling tradition. Lucy Boston's *The Children*

of *Green Knowe* however is an instance where it is virtually impossible to detect any difference of style between the inserted stories and the remainder of the text.

There are many novels where the inserted stories have a pragmatic function in acquainting both characters and reader with information; in such instances, the storyteller often seems to be given idiosyncratic

features of style, such as dialect, rather than those associated specifically with oral storytelling. Examples include Hagrid in Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, and John Faa in Pullman's *Northern Lights*.

Many other books divide the narrative between different voices, thus rendering to each of these something of the role of a storyteller.

Kipling's *Just-So Stories* are among the distinguished examples of the author posing directly as storyteller, while retellings of fairy tales frequently include a named story teller. One of the most accomplished creators of storytellers is Susan Price, perhaps because as a child she frequently had the experience of telling stories to her siblings. She seems fascinated by the techniques of oral storytelling. In *The Ghost Drum* the reader is constantly reminded that the whole text is being narrated by a cat, while stories in *The Sterkarm Handshake* have a more symbolic role, reflecting very emotively the situation of the principal characters.

It seems to me that more exploration of the way in which storytellers and storytelling are portrayed would be rewarding, related as it is to many issues concerned with narrative voice and point of view.

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**"There is an inevitable tension between orality itself and the conveying of it in written narrative ..."**

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# Speaking Pictures: Children's Picture Books in Performance

by Leilani Clark

When picture books are recorded on to audiotape, a visual medium is essentially made blind—sound is added and images are subtracted. This could be regarded as a fundamental problem, or a challenge.

On audiotapes sound is employed in three distinct ways:

## 1. THE VOICE

Storytelling predates printed matter and audiobooks re-establish this link with the oral tradition and assert the importance of spoken words. Audio highlights the role of the storyteller, who mediates between the author and the audience. An individual speaking voice may have certain resonances, and contain intentional or unintentional coding, carrying meaning far beyond the spoken word. All these things, and their effects on the listener, must be carefully considered when choosing a voice for an audio-recording.

## 2. SOUND EFFECTS (including silence and other accompanying non-verbal effects)

Sound effects and non-verbal communication create atmosphere and both add and anchor meaning. Silence is also an important signifier, put into context on audio by surrounding noises.

Sound can be used to pinpoint location, which encourages the listeners' concentration and involvement with the story. Doctor Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat and Other Stories* (1996, read by Adrian Edmondson) on audiotape is a good example of a verbal and aural quiz where the listener attempts to guess the characters' location and make sense of the narrative through sound.

## 3. MUSIC

'Music and images have a lot in common as media of communication; they are not understood in a direct, linear way... but irrationally, emotionally and individually' (Simon Frith, 1986, cited in Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 1988, p.68). This contrasts powerfully with the written word and its direct, linear narrative and as such is a completely different way of conveying meaning.

Music often interacts with and runs parallel to spoken words and sound effects. As with sound effects, music provides a frame for the narrative, linking separate sections, or it can operate as complementary emotional background.

On an audiobook, music can become part of the verbal narrative using lyrics, for example, the song 'Walking in the Air' from *The Snowman* (Howard Blake, 1984), which narrates the journey to the South Pole. In addition to conveying narrative, music can evoke mood, as sound effects do; high, inharmonious notes may signal tension and fear.

All three categories of sound play equally important roles in narrative and comprehension, and it can be argued that when they work in parallel, they require complex listening and decoding skills. Sound opens up other levels of perception in the listener and plays significant roles in meaning-making, creating atmosphere, evoking a sense of reality and triggering emotion. Sound is a crucial part of communication and should be recognised as bringing unique value to the audiobook.

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## The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter

The 'International' element of IBBY means that we need also to take note of what happens to books written in English when they reach the rest of the world! The Harry Potter books in particular have attracted a world-wide audience, and a new book, *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (edited Lana Whited, published University of Missouri Press, 2002) provides just this, including articles on the translation undertaken to render Harry Potter attractive to an American audience, as well as those into French, German and Spanish. Other features include sections on Harry's literary ancestry in epic, myth, school stories, and earlier fantasy novels, plus discussion of gender issues.

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### THE NEXT ISSUE

The Summer issue (copydate April 30<sup>th</sup>) of *IBBYlink* will have the theme of HUMAN RIGHTS, and the Autumn issue (copydate August 31<sup>st</sup>) will be about HUMOUR. Please send contributions (no more than 750 words) to Pat Pinsent, 23 Burcott Rd., Purley, CR8 4AD, [PatPinsent@aol.com](mailto:PatPinsent@aol.com)

**Speaking Pictures**

**Leilani Clark**

**Winter 2003**

# From Picture Book to Animated Film

by Fiona Collins

Animation for children has been in existence since the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of early films having been made in Europe between 1909 and 1937, the year of the premier of *Snow White*. The German director, Lotte Reiniger, is thought to be the first maker of a full length animated film, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926). However World War Two curtailed a great deal of the film making in Europe and American companies, especially Disney, began to dominate the field of animation. After the war, Czech animators, especially Jiri Trnka, came to the fore. Trnka's adaptation of *The Emperor's Nightingale* (1948) is regarded particularly highly. However in America in 1953 a particular kind of children's animation, the transformation of picture books into film, was developed by the Weston Woods studios. Their mission statement at the time stated: 'It is our role at Weston Woods to create audiovisual adaptations that are faithful reflections of the books themselves. We seek the best books from all over the world and adapt them in such a way as to preserve the integrity of the original.'

The studios adapted a range of picture books, including Pat Hutchins' *Rosie's Walk* and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. These were initially available on filmstrip and could be found in many primary classrooms in this country.

Now they are sold on video for both educational and home use. In all of the adaptations the flat characters of the picture book are brought to life for the viewer through movement and music.

In Britain, George Dunning founded a similar company, TVC, in 1957 with John Coates. TVC's remit was wider than that of Weston Woods. Over the years, TVC produced a range of animated films for both children and adults, including *Yellow Submarine*. However in the last twenty years TVC have adapted a variety of picture books into films. They have been successful due to the traditional animation techniques that are used, their faithfulness to the illustrator's style and the inclusion of original music scores specifically written for the films. *The Snowman*, by Raymond Briggs and directed by Dianne Jackson, has been their most successful. It was first shown on Channel 4 on Christmas Day in 1982 and is still shown annually. Sixteen years later (1998) another Raymond Briggs' book, *The Bear*, was shown on Channel 4. TVC have also adapted books by John Burningham, *Granpa* and *Oi! Get off Our Train*. The adaptations have been made for a family audience and shown at peak viewing time. That they are shown at these times provides hope that both children and future animators will see the value of bringing to life other quality picture books for the young viewer.

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## An Experiment in Textual Intervention

Adapting Margaret Mahy's *The Tricksters* for Studio Theatre by Mary E. Hine

This was a presentation condensing one of twelve essays that constitute the core of a critical/creative doctoral thesis exploring the work of four writers of young adult fiction, giving particular attention to notions of 'childhood' and 'family'. Particular emphasis concerns those structures as they are built around young adult characters' rites of passage into adulthood. Two concerns opened my discussion:

- Main issues in dealing with this text within the thesis.
- Adaptation Issues around changing genre to play script:

David Wood's perspective on writing for theatre, and a week's workshops with Shared Experience Theatre Company on their adaptation of Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* were strong influences on the work. David Wood and Margaret Mahy's storytelling base centring on family gave a working context. My working method was set out, using David Wood's 'Gutting'<sup>1</sup> while Bryony Lavery's 'cleaning out themes and symbols' techniques was used to capture the essence of the original work<sup>2</sup>. The biggest change in the adaptation was that Teddy was foregrounded, not Harry. The new text for the first two scenes of a Studio Theatre drama was pieced together using original narrative and dialogue, but not in its original sequence. Cross genre re-writing was shown to include hard decisions in realising an original effectively in a new form. A short commentary on the work concluded the session and lead into question time.

<sup>1</sup> David Wood with Janet Grant, *Theatre for Children, A Guide to Writing, Adapting, Directing and Acting*, Faber 1997

<sup>2</sup> Bryony Lavery's approach to adaptation was described during theatre workshops on the making of Shared Experience's production of Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop*, -.

**Picture Book to  
Animated Film**

**Fiona Collins**

**Adapting The  
Tricksters**

**Fiona Collins**

# Can Adults Play Children On Stage?

by David Wood

**As a writer for television and film, but mainly for theatre, I have aimed my work at children for many years.** I also direct many of my own plays, which often involves the casting of children's roles. I have never believed that children sit in a theatre and believe that what they are seeing is 'real'. I'm sure they realise that there are people up there telling a story, in a similar but more sophisticated version of the way they play out stories themselves.

But I am very interested in whether they care, or even notice, when the children on stage are played by adults. As a child, I don't think I cared. *Peter Pan* was the first play I saw, and it gave me the theatre bug, and I saw it with a shapely middle-aged lady, possibly Margaret Lockwood, playing Peter. No problem.

But now, as an adult, I find it sometimes worries me when adults play children. I sometimes get confused, especially about how old the actors—usually in their twenties—are meant to be in the play. Can actors make clear whether they are acting 5 or 8 or 12? I find it easier if I know the story, but recently, in America, I saw a very good production in which an actress played a girl, a kind of tomboy character. She was excellent. But I genuinely wasn't sure whether she was playing 8 or 12. Another concern is that sometimes the performances are twee or patronising or trying too hard to be childlike.

But first, let's look at a few practical first principles. First, it is a fact that if you want to feature a child character on film or television, you book a real child. Why? I suggest it is a visual thing. Close-ups can be cruel! Also, television and film somehow demand authenticity or realism. Furthermore, because filming is usually done in short bursts, a scene or a fragment of a scene at a time, child performers can be manipulated, cajoled, directed in each section. They are not asked to sustain their performance for any length of time. This is not to deny that some children are brilliant actors. But the technique of television and film is very different from that of the stage.

Having said that, in the days of my childhood, when television was live, a character like Billy Bunter was not played by a child. I remember another series, *The Appleyards*, in which children were played by older actors. In live television, they could not take the risk of giving too much responsibility to a child. Also the licensing laws probably restricted rehearsal and performing hours. But it is normally the case that on film, children play children. Obvious examples are *Harry Potter*, *Matilda*, *Oliver* and *Annie*. There are even exceptions in this area, however. In *The Railway Children*, often quoted as a classic children's film, Phyllis was played by Sally Thomsett as a very knowing child. It worked a treat, even though Miss

Thomsett was well into her 20s at the time. Compare this to *The Wizard of Oz*, in which as an adult I have often thought that Judy Garland looked much older than 12, which apparently she was at the time of filming.

I wrote the screenplay of the film *Swallows and Amazons*. Our director insisted on casting 'real' children, rather than acting-school children. He said this would automatically make them 'natural'. However, I often felt, and still feel, that many of their spoken inflections were wrong or didn't make sense. They didn't have the technique to reproduce the excitement or humour of the equivalent moment in the original Ransome book. This, I suggest, was not their fault. Sometimes they probably didn't understand the irony or the tongue-in-cheek of the adult 'comment'—most, if not all, children's writers are, after all, adult. Their work reflects their own childhood, or is a comment on childhood, which cannot help having occasionally a sophisticated adult's eye looking down.

The really interesting area to discuss is theatre. In a pantomime like *Babes in the Wood*, we expect to see real children as the babes. But we don't expect them to have to do very much. They are normally led round the stage by the Nurse, or by the Robbers. They are there to make us feel sorry for them. They do not have to act very much.

In big musical productions like *Oliver!*, *Annie* or *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* we expect to see children playing children, but everything they do is carefully structured to be not too demanding emotionally or musically. Yes, they probably sing and dance and speak, but even when they are heroes or heroines of the stories, the range of their performance is structured and contained. A cynic would say that the main reason they are on stage is that they are commercially useful. They provide the 'Aaaaaah' factor!

In Children's Theatre, for example, in plays produced by Polka, Unicorn, or smaller or larger companies who put on plays for children rather than for the family, different rules appear to apply.

First of all, the licensing laws limit the number of performances children can play, as well as the amount of rehearsal time they can work. There are limitations on touring, and financial implications when a chaperone and tutor has to be employed. More important, children's plays, as opposed to family theatre, often have a child protagonist who 'carries' the play. The character provides the 'motor' for the whole story, and the playing of such a role would, in the opinion of most practitioners, be too demanding for a child actor. So in Polka's wonderful production

(Continued on page 10)

**Adults Playing  
Children On Stage**

**David Wood**

# The Professional Child: Performing *Lord of the Flies*

by Peter Hollindale

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, first published in 1954, has always been a controversial text, because of its generally pessimistic view of humankind, but especially because it expresses that pessimism through a cast of boys. Children are widely if inconsistently regarded as repositories of original innocence even by those who would assent in some form (whether biological, psychological, spiritual or moral) to the concept of humanity's 'original sin'.

Despite the ideological disputes surrounding the novel, it rapidly came to be regarded as strong material for dramatisation, precisely because its cast of children made it readily playable by schools. Professional productions in the cinema and theatre have since followed, starting with Peter Brook's famous film version, first released in 1963, and recently marked by a notable stage production by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1995.

Clearly there are risks involved in asking young boys to enact such a challenging and disturbing interpretation of boyhood, since the acting experience inevitably prioritises behavioural reality over 'fable' and 'allegory'. Historical evidence since 1954 has tended to vindicate Golding's vision both of human nature generally and child nature in particular. For example, a 2002 television documentary called *Boys Alone*, recording a week-long experiment during which boys in Golding's chosen age-group were given the free run of a suburban house and garden, showed a

miniature *Lord of the Flies* situation spontaneously developing within days, with marked specific echoes of the novel. More generally, adult desire to believe in child innocence, and adult reactions to child violence and crime, combine to display deep-rooted inconsistencies and confusions in current attitudes to childhood. Moreover, childhood itself is rapidly undergoing physical and social change. Asking a child to play a child—to be a 'professional child'—is therefore a sensitive undertaking.

In these circumstances it is important to re-examine the film and theatre versions of *Lord of the Flies*, and the experiences and memories of children who took part in them, in order to determine whether the novel is appropriate for enactment, and what directorial methodology is indicated.

In addition to the two productions mentioned above, evidence is available from Henry Hook's film version of 1990, and a Pilot Theatre stage production, with a cast of adult actors, first performed in 1998. It is suggested that *Lord of the Flies* deserves regular present-day performance, but to be effective it requires a child cast. We therefore need a clear set of guidelines and safeguards to protect child actors, ensure that their work is rewarding rather than disturbing, and achieve satisfactory closure. Experience suggests that the novel—if anything more topical now than when first published—is more suitable in the interests of child actors for stage rather than screen, and that directorial procedure, even in professional productions, should include an element of teaching in addition to conventional direction, so that boy players do not merely perform, but can develop insight and perspective on the work as a whole.

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**“Children are widely if inconsistently regarded as repositories of original innocence...”**

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## Becoming Human, Becoming a Child by Michael Newton

The argument in this talk was that the fascination in children's films with the animation of inanimate characters (dolls, puppets, toys, marionettes) reflects children's relationship to dolls, toys and puppets in real life. In both cases, something unliving is imagined as being brought to life; something non-human is humanised, and turned into a conscious, animate other. Finally, the paper suggests that this process of the humanisation of the non-human connects to a sense in nineteenth and early twentieth-century psychology that the child itself is living through a process of being humanised - moving from primitive savage to rational adult. The humanisation and animation of the inanimate in film therefore subtly bears witness to an anxiety that the child itself requires the educational and psychological necessity of becoming fully conscious and human. To illustrate this process, the paper took two films by Walt Disney that foreground the process of animation as a way of looking at how a child may become human: *The Jungle Books* and *Pinocchio*.

**The Professional Child**

**Peter Hollindale**

**Becoming Human**

**Michael Newton**



# How Do They Do the Eyes? Televising *The Demon Headmaster*

by Gillian Cross

*The Demon Headmaster's* most high profile performance was as a television series. The adaptation followed the books fairly closely, but the inevitable changes produced a noticeable shift in emphasis. The Headmaster became more dominant and the external and visible prevailed over internal experiences and abstract ideas.

Terrence Hardiman's commanding performance as the Headmaster established him as the central figure. The need to make his hypnotic powers visible meant that descriptions of Dinah's experiences (*She was drifting, drifting... All she could see was two pools, deep green like the sea, and she seemed to sink into them...*) were replaced by a special effect showing rings radiating from the Headmaster's eyes. He, rather than Dinah, became the central focus and the hypnotism changed from an internal process to an external event.

From the beginning, children saw the Headmaster as the main character in the series and they drew and mimicked the hypnotic eyes. For a while, this image was familiar to large numbers of children and the character 'escaped' from the stories, turning up in other television programmes like 'Live and Kicking' and in the BBC's live Christmas show 'The Big Bash'.

By comparison, the child characters became relatively less important. Dinah retained her super-intelligence but became more vulnerable and Lloyd lost his insecurities. In the books, he sees Dinah as a threat to his role as leader. On television—played by a young actor obviously older than the other children—

he was comfortably in charge.

Throughout, the dramatisation focused on fast, external action rather than on internal conflicts and relationships. In the books, it is the Headmaster's attack on individuality which makes him a monster. The children's final triumph is due to group solidarity and individual determination.

On television, it was due to technology. The dramatisation built on the opportunities offered by *The Prime Minister's Brain*, where Dinah out-manoeuvres the Headmaster on computers. Subsequent programmes made the most of his forays into genetic engineering and advanced Internet technology. These technologies are fashionable and offer plenty of visual excitement. They promise power and control over nature and other people

and they involve expensive gadgetry which children aspire to own. All this is well suited to television, which needs instantly appealing images to grab and keep a fickle audience. The child characters became techno-heroes. The Headmaster's crime changed from the internal one of controlling people's minds to the external, visible one of making them behave like robots.

This change of emphasis was radical. Instead of being fictions about the dangers of unquestioned authority, the stories became fables about the dangers of technological power. Practical issues became more important than moral ones and the children triumphed because, ultimately, they understood the technology better than the Headmaster did.

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***“Throughout, the dramatisation focused on fast, external action rather than on internal conflicts and relationships...”***

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## ***But Why? But Why? Continued from page 2***

A third technique is one based in narrative and in story telling. David Greig's *Petra* (TAG, 1996) tells the story of a mother coping with the death of her young son. The narrative child has died in a bloody civil war and the young woman must try to articulate the reasons why he died. The playwright circumvents the child on stage by developing a narrative that responds to the violent absence of the child. The absence of the fictional child is highlighted in production by the immediate and very real presence of the children in the audience.

In telling stories about children to children, theatre productions find a range of performative and narrative solutions to the performance of the child. The solutions are predicated on the very real potential of the adult performer on stage but, in the reflexive tension between the adult performer and the diegetic child, they seek and find a creative and a critical symbiosis.

**How Do They Do the Eyes?**

**Gillian Cross**

## Staging Race and Gender

### *The Place of Anglo-American Girls in the Traditions of Recitation and Minstrelsy*

by Lynne Vallone

Expanding from the premise that Anglo-American young women and performance maintained an uneasy relationship throughout the nineteenth century, this essay argues that the contested view over the 'proper' placement of the (white) girl on, off, or near the stage, relied upon changing notions of female delicacy, utilizing the didactic potential in girls' dramatics, accepting limited expressions of humor as an appropriate rhetoric for girls, and, finally, exploiting race in staging girlhood. My paper sketched in broad strokes a trajectory of girls' performance activities—including recitation and blackface minstrelsy—and cultural attitudes toward performance over time and through Anglo-American culture. The recitation platform became a place for performing proper (white) girlhood, dispelling anxieties about female education, display, and

conduct. By linking two performance traditions that may appear antithetical, I demonstrated that the powerful nineteenth-century view of girlhood promoted in recitation—pure, morally elevated but subordinate to males—undergirds the comic and essentially racist form of late nineteenth-century girls' minstrelsy as well. Finally, I argued that mid-nineteenth-century recitation pieces spoken by a British maiden dressed in white performs girlhood through speech and gestures that, in part, delineate what girlhood is by what it is not: immodest, unchristian, hoydenish, passionate. Blackface minstrelsy from late nineteenth-century America reveals a similar construction of girlhood—but with a significant difference 'necessary' only when black girls were no longer contained within the realm of the exotic, the alien, or the slave.

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### **Adults Playing Children - Continued from page 7**

of *Playing from the Heart*, a play by Charles Way about the percussionist Evelyn Glennie, as a young girl, the part of Evelyn was played by an actress in her mid to late 20s. In Unicorn's *Great Expectations*, Pip was played by an older actor. In both cases they helped narrate their own story. They sometimes stepped outside the play and then stepped back in. Such sophisticated techniques would be very difficult for a child to perform convincingly.

I would like to share two stories from my own work. When I first adapted and directed my production of Roald Dahl's *The BFG*, I was asked to conduct an open audition to find Sophie. This was partly for publicity reasons. I saw over 160 Sophies in a day, actresses of all ages from 12 to 45, nannies, girls off the street, who fancied having a go, even two ladies of restricted growth. But I never believed that I would find my Sophie in this way, and assumed that I would end up using an actress in her 20s. However, I was wrong. I found Fiona Grogan, who was just 16. She was a dance student at Arts Educational, and displayed a wonderful feistiness, batting the lines back and forth over the net towards me, as BFG, like a young Martina Navratilova. Yes, she was probably twice the age of Sophie, but conveyed the essence of Sophie brilliantly at, in my opinion, a remarkably young age. The Sophie in the current production, I might add, is nearer 30, but just as good.

A couple of years after *The BFG*, I was casting my adaptation of Roald Dahl's *The Witches*. I was determined to find a boy to play Boy, thinking that it would be very obvious if it were played by a boyish girl. I saw every young actor—over the age of 16 (because of licensing problems)—but could never find anyone who I felt would be convincing. The main problem, was, of course, the broken voices. In the end I remembered an actress I had seen in a production of *Daisy Pulls It Off*. I auditioned her and she immediately won the role. She was able to play Boy extremely convincingly, at the tender age of 32.

But the question is, did the children notice? Did the audience mind? This is the area of research that interests me. It is easy to say, just ask them if they accepted the actor or actress in the role. But it is not as simple as that. I don't know whether one would get an entirely honest answer. My own view is that they probably would notice if a child played the role and couldn't do it well enough. Children can be very critical. Furthermore, the adult actor can often combine a 'childness' with an adult's view point, which can enrich the performance and the play. It would be fascinating to know what is really going on in the heads of the children sitting watching a play.

To conclude my talk, I showed some video extracts from of *Tom's Midnight Garden*: the television version, in which Tom is played by a child in, in my opinion, a rather stilted and self-conscious manner; the film version, in which Tom is played by an actor who looks too old for the role; and Unicorn's stage version in which the essence of Tom is captured, in my opinion, brilliantly, by an actor in his 30s. Finally I showed a scene from *The Witches*: the film version, in which Boy is played well by an American child actor, and the stage version, in which the part is played by an actress in her 30s. I think both work well.

# Emil and the Detectives in Post-Modern Berlin.

by Vanessa Joosen

The latest German version of *Emil und die Detektive* came out in 2001 and was directed by Franziska Buch. It is this film version that will be the subject of my paper.

Most visual adaptations which have been produced since the book was first published in 1929 have added more action to the basic story, for instance by inventing extra criminals, or more story lines. This is also what happens in Franziska Buch's adaptation:

Grundeis robs several people, Pony is kidnapped, and Emil breaks into a hotel room to retrieve his money. However, Franziska Buch's adaptations are more original than a mere addition of action scenes. Buch also makes changes on the level of gender, in the portrayal of relationships between parents and children, and on the level of morality. Moreover, this director stresses playfulness and humour rather than anxiety and loneliness.

A number of details were updated to make the film appeal to a contemporary audience. The detectives wear trendy clothes, listen to hiphop, and chase thieves on skateboards. Little Tuesday, who had to wait by the telephone in the novel, can freely move around in the film version: he now has a cell phone. According to Isa Schikorsky, the detectives in Kästner's novel represent a whole microcosmos of society. Of course, in seventy years' time, society has changed quite a bit, and so have the detectives in Franziska Buch's film. The group no longer consists of young white males only, as was the case in Kästner's novel, but now also includes several girls and children of colour.

The differences between adults and children gradually disappear in *Emil and the Detectives*. The way the detectives argue about possible strategies to catch the thief, resembles debates among politicians. In the film, the distinction between adults and children is even more vague. Adults enjoy the same things as children: Mr Grundeis reads comic books; the hotel waiter collects autographs from filmstars; and the Berlin cab driver likes playing along with the detectives. The reversal of roles is most obvious in the relationship between Gustav Hummel and his mother, Emil's host family in Berlin. One fragment is particularly interesting to illustrate this point. Unlike in the novel, Emil's guest family in the film does not notice that he is chasing a thief in Berlin. This is because the detectives have sent a replacement, Gypsie.

Gustav is not so happy with the new visitor: as usual, he has to take care of the children that his mother so generously welcomes to their house. Even though this fragment is one of the funniest instances in the movie, one cannot but notice a sense of bitterness in Gustav's complaint:

*Frau Hummel:* I'm off to the Third World Discussion Group. Running late anyway.

*Gustav:* 12 minutes and 43 seconds to be precise.

*Frau Hummel:* Hey, do you happen to know...

*Gustav:* Car keys are in the pocket of your coat, your glasses are on your head!

*Frau Hummel:* [sighs] What would I be without you? Gustav, thank you for all this. I love you very much.

*Gustav:* Me too, mum. It's okay.

*Frau Hummel:* And be nice to Emil, okay? Bring him a clean towel in the bathroom. And show him your science kit and your computer games.

*Gustav:* [mumbles] Give him your books and favourite clothes, lend him your bicycle and wipe his bum.

*Frau Hummel:* And don't forget to correct my sermon for Sunday, darling.

*Gustav:* Of course, mummy, I'd be glad to. If necessary, I can stay up all night. I don't need any sleep...

It is no coincidence that children reclaim the right to be children at the end of the movie.

The final section of the paper focused on the deconstruction of the idea that there is only one fixed story in *Emil and the Detectives*. Few English translations contain the first chapters of the Emil story, where Erich Kästner tells the reader in an ironic tone how the story came about. In this preface, Kästner tells the reader that he had actually planned to write a completely different story, about a cannibal girl from Borneo. Since he did not remember, however, how many bones a whale has, this story did not work out. The first few chapters are now lying under his table, to prevent it from shaking. The ironic metafictional level of Kästner's preface is very difficult to render in film, but here the DVD version provides new possibilities. As Erich Kästner deconstructs the origin of the story in his preface, the director deconstructs

(Continued on page 12)

**Emil and the Detectives**

**Vanessa Joosen**

# Idioms in English-into-Arabic Dubbed Children's Animated Films

by Jehan Zitawi

**Domestically produced and internationally imported children's programmes, animated pictures and cartoons constitute a major part of the audio-visual material available for children in the Arab world.** These not only serve as forms of entertainment; they also hold positive learning messages, such as acceptable behaviour and the relaying of cultural values.

My present study focuses on children's animated pictures/series dubbed from English into Arabic and shown on e-junior channels in Abu Dhabi and Dubai television. In the Arab world, the demand for dubbing and subtitling material is constantly increasing. Surprisingly, academic and professional circles have neglected to conduct studies on screen translation or dubbing in particular. Looking at this material is therefore important for various reasons: (1) it draws attention to the different strategies employed by Arab translators to render one of the most problematic areas in translation, that is idiomatic expressions, throughout the process of translating and dubbing children's animated pictures; (2) it investigates the factors that affect the translators' choice of certain strategies; (3) it is one of the very few studies conducted on English-Arabic dubbing and dubbing

for children in the Arab world.

My study involves looking at 52 episodes taken from three dubbed children's animated pictures shown on the e-junior channel, which is one of the 70 channels that E-Vision provides in Abu Dhabi and Dubai (UAE). Based on the analysis of how idiomatic expressions are rendered in both stylistic and semantic

terms, the following strategies that embody the various techniques that are prominent in translating idioms for dubbing: meaning-based translation, naturalisation/localisation, addition, deletion and literal translation.

The art of translating idioms in dubbed children's animated series is a complex intricate task with many extra technical linguistic factors and constraints. It should

definitely not be considered a mere linguistic exercise but rather as an act of intercultural communication motivated by the rewards of making comprehensible a new or foreign culture. Hence, in addition to their linguistic abilities, translators should possess sufficient knowledge of the meaning and significance of all idiomatic expressions in both cultural milieus if they are going to produce a successful translation.

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***"In the Arab world, the demand for dubbing and subtitling material is constantly increasing..."***

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## ***Emil and the Detectives - Continued from page 11***

the origin of the film. The DVD contains an option where Franziska Buch provides spoken comments to most of the scenes. In a voice-over, she tells the viewer how many things went wrong while filming, and thus breaks with the illusion of realism that the film may provide for some children. The actors did not really enjoy the romantic beach scene where Emil and his father are playing with kites, for instance: each time something went wrong, they had to wipe out all the footmarks that the actors had left in the sand, before they could start all over again. Both Kästner and Franziska Buch explicitly touch upon the artificiality of book and film. This postmodern idea becomes more entertaining than alienating as soon as child viewers understand that the story is, of course, fictional. The idea of one fixed story may be lost, but instead they get an ironic view on the process of writing and filming. What the book and the novel version of *Emil und die Detektive* share is a sense of hope and belief in children. Both Kästner and Buch show that children should learn to work together, and both stress the almost utopian result of this cooperation. Strong bonding between children becomes more necessary than ever in a world where parents are very busy, get divorced, and often behave like children themselves. Buch retained many of the modern and postmodern elements that Kästner already provided in his novel when he wrote it over seventy years ago. The director, however, by adding humorous details and increasing the sense of playfulness that Berlin provides, has turned Emil into an exciting and very rich film—a film which I hope you will all get an opportunity to see.

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**Idioms**

**Jehan Zitawi**

# Creepy Kids

## The Use of Child's Perspective in Films of the Uncanny

by Laura Atkins

This paper examined the performance of childhood in films of the uncanny, focusing on *The Sixth Sense* (1999) and *The Others* (2001). The starting point was Freud's definition of the uncanny, *unheimlich* in German, literally meaning unhomely. Freud concludes that the uncanny is an experience that happens when the familiar, which has been repressed, is unrepressed, or essentially, when the familiar becomes strange. There is a strong connection between childhood and the experience of the uncanny, as childhood beliefs make-up the core of these repressed ideas which become unrepressed: beliefs such as the animation of inanimate objects and the omnipotence of thought. According to this definition of the uncanny, it is an experience felt *after* childhood, relying on repressed beliefs which are, in adulthood, suddenly shown to be potentially true. The uncanny is found in the space between adult rational knowledge and childhood beliefs which adults would consider to be fantasy.

I summarised the plots of both films, which focus to a great extent on knowing, and different levels of knowing. Both films, while set in the realm of ghosts and the dead coming back to life, end with surprise twists which ask the viewer to review the film, seeing it now in a completely different way. Looking at the role of the main child performers, it becomes clear that the children in both films have access to a deeper level of knowing than do the adults. In *The*

*Sixth Sense*, Cole understands both the film as viewed the first time, and also the surprise twist. In *The Others*, Anna's knowledge is not as deep as Cole's, yet she sees more than her mother, the main adult character. While the children have deeper access to knowing, the ultimate revelation of the surprise twist in both films is focalised through the adult characters, and the adults help the children to understand their knowledge.

By having the child know or see more accurately than the adult, these films become a representation of, and justification for, the uncanny as described by Freud. In these films the uncanny is truth, the dead really do come back to life. So the childhood belief IS true. This world could perhaps be seen as one that empowers children, where their (in)experience and innocence allow them access to truth in a more powerful way than is available to adults. Yet, in the end, it is the adult experience that is the central one.

These films focus on the child characters to a point, but the resolution and concluding scenes focalise through the adult character. Hence the child's role is to bring the adult character in the film to see the truth, while simultaneously enhancing the experience of the uncanny for the adult viewer. While children have multiple functions in these films, performing childhood, in the end, has very little to do with the real child.

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## LISTEN UP! A Storytelling Residency Involving Schools in the Western Education Library Board, Northern Ireland

by Patrick Ryan

My talk reported on an exciting storytelling residency involving disadvantaged schools in Northern Ireland. Seventeen schools (four secondary and thirteen primary) had a storyteller in residency for twelve half-day visits. The teller focused on one class or small group. The teller was resident not just to perform stories: most of the work involved getting students and teachers to learn, create, and tell stories orally.

The schools led the scheme somewhat, so each experience was different. Some had the students performing stories for younger children, their peers, and/or their families and teachers. Others did cross-generational work, collecting stories from their families and/or elderly whom they visited in an old people's home. Many linked the oral narrative activities to creative writing work, developing original raps, poetry, songs and new stories.

Response to the scheme was overwhelmingly positive, and the benefits reported were many. The main purpose of the project was to develop oracy and the students' self-confidence and self-esteem. This was certainly achieved. Teachers reported adapting the techniques and ideas modeled by the tellers for other classes. Anecdotal evidence suggested that high school students involved in the scheme saw a reading age rise by 2.3 to 3.0 years.

The scheme was documented on video. I showed the video for the first 'Listen Up!' and we discussed the programme and how it might be adapted for other schools and education authorities. 'Listen Up!' was repeated in 2002 and plans are for a final run in 2003, both of which will also be documented on video.

For more information on the videos, contact Zoe Reid, Education Manager, The Verbal Arts Centre, Mall Wall, Stable Lane, Bishop-Street-Within, Derry, Northern Ireland, BT48.

Creepy Kids

Laura Atkins

Listen Up!

Patrick Ryan

Winter 2003

# Book Review: TWO IBBY BOOKS

by Pat Pinsent

## Jella Lepman, *A Bridge of Children's Books*

(2002; first published in English 1969; translated by Edith McCormick) Dublin: O'Brien Press (ISBN 0962787831).

## Nilima Sinha (ed.), *Stories from Across the Globe*

(2002) Gurgaon: Scholastic India (ISBN 8176551201)

Those unfamiliar with the work of the International Board on Books for Young People would do well to begin with these two very different books. Jella Lepman's autobiography describes her work in Europe during the immediate post-war years, while the collection of short stories by authors from nineteen different countries, published to celebrate IBBY's half century, represents what the organisation is achieving today.

In her foreword to Lepman's book, Mary Robinson, UN Commissioner for Human Rights, describes her as an inspirational figure who 'empowered children... by ensuring that they had access to books, in the very difficult context of post-war Germany' (p.4). As Tayo Shima, President of IBBY, observes in her Introduction, Lepman was fifty-four when she returned to her German homeland after wartime exile in London, the point at which the description of her experiences begins. It soon becomes apparent that Lepman must have been a very formidable woman, in the best sense of the word! When she approached military or civil dignitaries asking for space for book exhibitions, they must often have complied with her requests out of knowledge that she would persevere until she got what she wanted, whether or not they subscribed to her philosophy. This philosophy—that what was needed to put to rights the thinking of a generation of German children whose minds had been warped by Nazism was a plentiful supply of children's literature—may seem a little over-idealistic but it would be difficult to dissent from its spirit or to fail to appreciate its results.

Lepman's emphasis on the provision of children's books in a country that had been devastated by bombing and was suffering from serious shortages of food and fuel resulted from her prophetic vision, to the furtherance of which she was able to enlist prominent figures such as Erich Kastner, Martin Buber and Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1949 she established the International Youth Library in Munich, enlisting assistants from all over the globe, and followed this by a conference to which she invited individuals from what she describes as 'a private list ... of Who's Who in children's literature' (p.137). Bitterness was expressed by delegates whose countries had been overrun during the war, while 'Far too many in Germany were living in the dangerous delusion that they could rid themselves of their Nazi past with a shrug.' Nevertheless, 'On a black, wintry Sunday, the 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1951, the establishment of the International Board on Books for Young People was unanimously approved' (p.141).

In spite of the sometimes rather prosaic style of the translation, moments of humour appear, such as her initial encounter with an American colonel who thinks

that the right place for women is 'strolling along the Rue de Paix in chiffon dresses,' rather than being sent, as Lepman has, to instigate a process of re-education in Germany. To his question as to whether she would rather be re-incarnated as a man or a woman, she replies: 'Preferably neither. I'd like to be a titmouse or a sunflower or...' (p.9). Her powers of diplomacy are revealed throughout the book, as she negotiates with officials from a variety of countries. At the end she recalls the incidents of her career, reflecting her faith in youth:

In many parts of the world children were holding books in their hands and meeting over a bridge of children's books. And all this was only a start. The possibilities were without limit. First the postwar world, now the developing countries— one day there might be a new call, a children's expedition to the moon? (pp.154-5)

The collection of *Stories from across the globe* surely shows the fulfilment of Lepman's work, even if it does not actually include stories from the moon. While the majority of the sources are European, Japan, India and South America are also represented, and the book itself is, as Sinha states in her foreword, the result of Indian IBBY's project 'to build bridges of understanding through stories representing the various IBBY national sections.' The stories have an equivalent range of different translators, all of whom have created readable English versions, and there are illustrations from all the participating countries.

Inevitably some stories are more effective than others, and opinions will vary as to the most successful. Approaches range through fantasy and fable to everyday realism, while subject matter goes from that of the Albanian story, 'The chocolate bar,' with its theme of potential child abuse, to the safer domestic territory of the Belgian 'An alarm clock ticking', about a boy's wish to have a dog. One of the most unusual stories is the Iranian, 'The milk'; a motherless boy has been breastfed by most of the women in a village, which causes him to have an ambivalent and complicated kinship with the children of these women. Finally his dedication to his studies means that all of them, and their mothers, become proud of him. A story like this certainly opens the reader's eyes to a very different culture!

I particularly enjoyed the irony in the Lithuanian story, 'Little Old Man', in which a boy refuses to give up his bus seat to elderly people, since he claims he is really aged one hundred and twenty. He is treated by fellow passengers as if that were true; they take him to a Nursing Home, where he is welcomed as 'a wonderful little old man,' 'a perfect example of how not to give in to old age.' Alarmed by the encounter with his 'room-mate' and the expectation that he can 'feed him with a spoon, slop out his night pot and spittoon...', the boy escapes, ignoring any opportunity to take a bus.

(Continued on page 15)

# 50 Years of IBBY

**28th IBBY Congress, 29th Sept - 3rd Oct. 2002, Basel, Switzerland**

by Pam Robson

IBBY was founded in 1953 by Jella Lepman, a German journalist. Her ideals, that books and reading can essentially contribute to peace and international understanding, are still carried on today and at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress her name was to be heard many times. Jella Lepman wrote *A Bridge of Children's Books*, which has just been reissued. The theme of the IBBY Congress 2002 was 'Children And Books: A Worldwide Challenge.' The Congress opened on the evening of Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September with the Opening ceremony and presentation of the prestigious Hans Andersen Awards. Aidan Chambers, winner of the writer's award, received his medal and diploma and delivered an outstanding acceptance speech. Quentin Blake, winner of the illustration award, though unable to be present, sent a superb video of his acceptance speech.

It would be impossible to summarise, even briefly, the intensive programme of events that was to follow over the next three days. An IBBY Congress is not for the faint-hearted! However, one of the highlights was a presentation by Jostein Gaarder during which he argued with vigour the question: 'Books for a World Without Readers?' His audience was spellbound by his sheer conviction and philosophical fervour. He spoke from the heart, joking that he became a writer as an act of revenge for having had since childhood, '... an intense feeling of living in a fairytale, yes, in an imponderable mystery.' Adults always rejected his attempts to voice these feelings so he '... decided never to become a grown-up who took the world for granted.' Gaarder outlined briefly the transition from oral to literary traditions of story-telling, describing four stages in its history:

1. The complete or partially preliterate culture - the golden age of story-telling.
2. The pre-modern literary culture—the remains of pre-literate culture's riches are written down and new stories are written, including artificial fairy tales. The first stories 'for children' appear.
3. Modern national culture with an increasing element of foreign and translated culture. Extensive publishing for children.
4. The post-modern, globalised and net-based civilisation in which entertainment predominates. Culture has become an international commodity.

He believes that most people exist somewhere

between stages 3 and 4, but emphasised that some cultures have been swept directly from stage 1 to stage 4. He was eager to stress that what is important to every culture is not a surplus of worthless books but a supply of good stories, oral or printed. He declined to voice an opinion regarding the effects of mass media upon books, claiming that it is still too soon to reach any decision, but insisting upon the certainty that the story will survive. What Gaarder wishes to see preserved in books is *good* stories because only *good* stories survive. He compares a good story to a virus that is highly infectious, 'Neither vaccines nor vitamins are effective against a good story. Not even reality-TV or computer games can smother it. The genuine story has already built up antibodies against that kind of thing.'

Literature is, according to Gaarder, '...one of the bedrocks of human civilisation.' He firmly believes that, unlike the video or the computer game, the book is all absorbing because it is so interactive that the mind cannot wander, 'The book lives within us, it is reinvented in us as we read.' He is convinced that the more mass media takes over the lives of children and the less family members communicate with each other, '...the greater children's *need* for books will be.' He feels so strongly about the breakdown of the family unit that he suggested changing the title of his talk to 'Books for Children in a World without Parents?' This led him to consider the irony of the parent whom he overheard complaining that children take up so much time! Gaarder's response to this sad statement was 'Yes. Life is time-consuming.' He went on to say 'To enrich oneself with books is time-consuming. To enrich one's children is time-consuming—and sometimes almost irreconcilable with one's own agenda.' He sees books as a source of warmth for those children who have missed out on parental warmth. His belief is that many children, brought up in a concrete jungle, are crying out for intellectual nourishment: books, he insists, do have a future.

Jostein Gaarder concluded with a triumphant flourish, 'May books for children and young people buzz like angry horseflies in the literary landscape. May they prick us from our humdrum Sleeping Beauty slumber and keep our wonderment about existence alive!' He received a standing ovation.

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## **Two Books - Continued from page 14**

Perhaps inevitably today, a favourite theme in many stories is the computer. I enjoyed the Russian story, 'The Girl Death,' where Gosha wins extra years of life because the girl sent to summon him to the next world becomes addicted to a computer game at which he is particularly adept. Everyone will however find their own favourite in this collection which should at the same time inform young readers about differences in culture and help them to realise how similar children are throughout the world. Such an effect would certainly have pleased Jella Lepman.

**IBBY Jubilee**

**Pam Robson**

# 'All the World's Stage'

## Children's Literature as Performance

by Rosemary Ross Johnston, University of Technology, Sydney

The essence of the performative is repetition and iteration, saying something over and over again, doing something over and over again, being said about in all sorts of different ways. Butler's ideas (1990,1993) in the feminist critical area also provide a provocative backdrop to considerations of children's literature. Performativity describes the production, through constant repetition, reference and citation, of subjects or selves as effects. Rather than performance being the effect of identity, identity is the effect of performance. The postmodern conception of performance and performativity relates to the governing/fashioning of the individual by the critical collective mass of other individuals—a sort of cultural hegemony. Performativity thus relates to belonging and to community.

Children's literature constructs for children, from babyhood on, coded images: of the world, of belonging, of community and of being; it represents, cross-references, and constitutes a community of belonging. Children's books *perform* the world to/for children. The theoretical idea of *performance* relates to the iteration and reiteration of cultural practices, through which 'acts' derive their binding power. Who I am does not shape what I do; what I do shapes who I am. By extension, the representations of community in which I participate, its norms and conventions, and the way in which I am cited or referred to by that community, shape who I am. Representation constitutes.

Butler discusses drag as an example of performativity (Butler 1993, p.230). This notion of drag—and ideas about dressing up, spectacle, the politics of visibility, parodic practice, and mimicry versus masquerade—presents another way of reading

children's books. Drag depends on citations, quotations, rituals and practices that make present a specific community of belonging (and non-belonging). In an encrypting of otherness, it is an embodied performativity that both cites norms and transgresses them.

Children's books dress up (or dress down) childhood in various guises and disguises (as animals or toys, for example, or as particular types of children wearing particular types of clothes, speaking in a particular type of language, having particular interests and ideas). They also, in the same way, dress up (or dress down) adulthood, and dress up (or dress down) community.

Some books are written by adults dressed in a type of drag and masquerading as children. This is not true of a text such as *Peepo* which is a phenomenological study of a child's enlarging mindscape; it performs, with great integrity of focalisation and voice, a community of belonging to the child, for the child, while nonetheless not concealing a flawed and fractured world (England during World War II).

Other texts grapple with issues of war in various ways, sometimes dressing it up, sometimes covering it over in imageries of recuperated countryside, sometimes using parodic figures dressed in a type of tragic drag, sometimes assuming a voice and focalisation of pseudo-innocence. This all provokes ethical questions such as: How authentic is this? How authentic should it be in a picture book? Should an evil such as war be glossed or dressed up? Does invoking a sense of time beyond that of the individual, as in *Rose Blanche*, trivialise that individual? Is an ethical authenticity incompatible with the idea of an ethics of hope?

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## CALENDAR & EVENTS

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2003, Society of Authors, South Kensington, London

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BRITISH SECTION OF IBBY

The business part of the meeting will be followed by an opportunity to hear Jay Heale (until recently Chair of the Hans Andersen Award jury) speak. For more information and bookings, contact Géraldine D'Amico on 020 7073 1307 or [geraldine.d-amico@diplomatie.fr](mailto:geraldine.d-amico@diplomatie.fr). Box office : 020 7073 1350 Website : [www.institut-francais.org.uk](http://www.institut-francais.org.uk)

November 2003

### IBBY CONFERENCE

The November IBBY conference will centre on India. More information on our next issue!

Papers are invited for a conference: 'SHAKESPEARE'S CHILDREN- CHILDREN'S SHAKESPEARES' to be held at Shakespeare's Globe, autumn 2003. Contact Robert Shaughnessy or Susanne Greenhalgh, Drama, Theatre and Performance Department, University of Surrey Roehampton, SW15 5PH for further details.

**All the World's Stage**

**Rosemary Ross Johnston**

**Calendar & Events**

**Winter 2003 - 16**