



Dossier of Cyprus IBBY
Hans Christian Award Candidate

Anna Kouppanou

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1. Biographical note on Cyprus IBBY Hans Christian Award Candidate, Dr Anna Kouppanou

Anna Kouppanou is an author of literature for children and young people. She is a teacher, a philosopher of education –writing on topics such as theory of education, childhood, technology, literacies, and literature. She is also a teacher trainer and above all a devoted promoter of the love of reading.

Anna holds a B.Ed. in Primary Education (University of Cyprus), an MA in Intercultural Education and Psychology (University of Cyprus), a PhD in Philosophy of Education (UCL Institute of Education, University College London), having completed a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the University of Cyprus, concerning the characteristics and functionalities of literary texts and technological artifacts. At the time, Anna is pursuing a second PhD in Children’s Literature from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Academically, she has published extensively, and her latest academic book is titled: *Technologies of Being in Martin Heidegger: Nearness, Metaphor and the Question of Education in Digital Times* (London: Routledge).

Anna has a wide range of teaching experience. She has taught in Cyprus primary schools, at the Cyprus Educational Mission of Great Britain, and in in-service training programs for teachers. She has also taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Philosophy of Education, Children's Literature, the Didactics of Children's Literature, and Postmodern Philosophy, at the European University Cyprus and at the University of Cyprus. Through her work at the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, Anna has been the coordinator for the implementation of the New Curriculum of Literature for Cyprus Elementary Schools, the designer of many programs of teacher’s professional learning and of various teaching material. She participated in the organization of many literature conferences. During her last two years at the Institute, she has designed and has been coordinating the First Network of Schools Promoting the Love of Reading in Cyprus.

Anna loves literature –prose, poetry, novels, words, signs, the workings of textuality, the textuality of the world, reading and writing. She grew up listening to her refugee grandma’s stories and fairytales, losing herself in narratives, inhabiting a world of magical realism, confusing the real with the imaginary, realizing finally that telling stories is the way to change

the world. Anna has always been writing poetry –but her true passion is writing children’s and young adult books. ‘What if?’ is her favorite question –a suitable question for social change.

Anna’s literary work has won numerous awards and nominations (Cyprus State Award for Young Adult Literature in 2010 and 2015, The Reader Literary Magazine Award in 2015, Cyprus IBBY Award for Contemporary Fairy-tale in 2001 and 2015, Women’s Literary Society Award in 2013, and others). Her first children’s book – written at the age of twenty-one – received the first prize in Cyprus IBBY competition for an unpublished contemporary fairy-tale, sending her off onto the path of fiction writing. Anna never looked back. She continued writing nonstop, experimenting with different genres and themes. Her work is largely concerned with matters of otherness, social equality, the environment and climate change, poverty, the lack of education, body image, gender, and the possibilities of imagination. Her book *The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore*, a posthumanist political allegory about a group of thinking and speaking dogs, attempting to claim their rights, is representative of these concerns.

Anna is especially interested in the promotion of the love of reading. She has been organizing programs and actions towards this aim for years. She regularly visits libraries, schools, and universities, teaching children and learners of all ages. Anna considers storytelling a liberating, therapeutic and empowering practice, wishing to share it with anyone willing to listen. She has organized the action ‘The Suitcase Readers’, which connected various schools from urban and rural areas in Cyprus, promoting the love of reading. In cooperation with the Museum of Fairytale, Anna has participated in programs of creativity that built up children’s resilience during quarantine (due to the Covid-19 pandemic). Also, through her work at the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute she coordinated the program “Authors Write and Children Illustrate Stories of Hope and Strength concerning the Covid-19” (initiated by IBBY Cyprus) and edited the resulting published collection of illustrated stories. The project invited writers to create stories of hope, concerning Covid-19, and then asked children to illustrate the stories during the time of lock-down. Children could see their work in the page: https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2920&Itemid=498&lang=el . Anna is an Official Advocate for the Children’s Rights Campaign, as initiated by the Cyprus’ Commissioner of Children’s Rights. Finally, Anna is the founder of the Cyprus First Children’s Conference about Literature (2022) and of the Center of Creative Writing and Reading for Change. Her dream is to be able to listen to children and to continue writing stories about and for them.

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2. A portrait photograph of the candidate



Image design by Kelly Matathia-Kovo

3. A statement describing Kouppanou's contribution to literature for young people

Anna Kouppanou was born in Cyprus in 1979. She has completed her undergraduate studies in Education Sciences (University of Cyprus), her postgraduate studies in Intercultural Dimensions of Education and Psychology (University of Cyprus), and her Doctoral Studies in Philosophy of Education (UCL Institute of Education, University College London). She has worked as a teacher in primary education, as an Education Officer at the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI), as a Specialist Scientist, and as a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Cyprus, teaching philosophy and education, and researching issues concerned with philosophy of education, philosophy of technology and literary theory. Her research work has been published in international academic journals. From her role as an Education Officer at the CPI, Kouppanou has contributed to the design and implementation of the New National Curriculum in Literature, whilst in the last two years Kouppanou has designed and has been running the CPI' First Network of Schools Promoting the Love of Reading with excellent results. Last year, Kouppanou has also founded the First Children's Conference on Literature, which was met with great enthusiasm. The conference will also take place this year, while children will be invited not only as participants, but as members of the organizing committee of the conference. Parents and carers will also be invited, as last year, to take part in love of reading seminars.

Kouppanou's work is multifaceted, celebrated both in Cyprus and abroad. With books such as *The Incredible Revelation of Sebastian Montefiore*, awarded the Republic of Cyprus State Award for Young Adult Literature, the 1st Prize in the Competition for Contemporary Fairy-tale of the Cyprus Association of Books for Children and Youth (Cyprus IBBY), the Award of the literary magazine "O Anagnostis" (The Reader), and included in the honorary list of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY Honor List 2018), Kouppanou's books promote inclusion and acceptance through the genres of fantasy and realism, while encouraging interspecies coexistence, respect for human and nonhuman otherness, cultivating the need for social change.

With her works, *Aria Changes Worlds* (IBBY Cyprus, 2001), *The Argonauts of Time* (Republic of Cyprus State Award, 2010), *The Day we Broke the World - The Club of the Lost Children Vol. 1*, *In the Heart of Darkness and Beyond - The Club of the Lost Children Vol. 2*, Kouppanou contributes to the renewal of themes and narrative techniques in children's literature not only in Cyprus, but also in Greece, giving special breath to the genre of fantasy. Furthermore, with books, such as *Grandpa, Superman and a Little Cherry*, (Kedros, 2018, Women's Literary Fellowship Commendation, 2013) and *The Disappearance of K. Papadakou and what happened that summer* (2018, Shortlisted for the Hellenic Republic State Award, Shortlisted for the Republic of Cyprus State Award, Shortlisted for Greece IBBY Award), Kouppanou has immersed herself into realism, dealing with important psychological, personal, and social issues, while capturing contemporary depictions of childhood and adolescence.

Kouppanou's work is rich and multidimensional. Apart from awards and distinctions, Kouppanou's work has been especially embraced by the reading audience in Cyprus and in Greece. Her fiction is often organized around the creative combination of real and imaginary components, drawing on enchanted and mythical elements that take on new meaning, forming, in fact, clear intertextual connections with the original texts (Spanaki, 2010). Kouppanou also achieves impressive ideological transformations, while her books are characterized by a thoughtful and playful philosophical foundation (Svoronou, 2015). Anna Kouppanou is constantly developing her art of storytelling. When we read, her books,

On the one hand, we can't wait to turn the page, so as to see the development of the story, and on the other hand, we pause in order to delight in the narrative intensity of the excerpt, the linguistic power of the words and the anthropological depth of the characters. Such dialectical intensity, which combines suspense with the self-sufficiency of the scene is proof of the writer's mastery in controlling the narrative speed. Clearly, Kouppanou has the gift to write narrative –she has ideas, stories able to torment her, if they are not put on the paper. What's more, it is not difficult to see the writer's concern for each one of her commas and every seemingly inconsequential

word of her book. Her capacity as a poet is not irrelevant to this (Karatasou, 2020).

Staying a little longer with Kouppanou's narrative artistry, we need to take note of her choices in language. Indeed, her literary work engages in 'a constant play, a dialogue between the signified, the thing, and the signifiers –the form. It is so difficult to find the balance between sharpness and chatter, between the richness of expression and laconicism, between what we call immediacy and indirectness in linguistic practice, but Anna Kouppanou succeeds very much in this' (Ioannidou, 2018, p. 135) It would be also an omission not to mention 'the play with the narrative techniques that the author seems to develop. On the one hand, this refers to a game in language, and on the other, to a negotiation with social issues played out through a game of different voices. The text belongs both to the author and to the reader, the voices are many, and they come together harmoniously' (Ioannidou, 2018, p. 137).

The characters in Kouppanou's works are also quite important and always well-wrought, a dynamic force organizing her books. These are three-dimensional heroes, with past, present, and future, desires, problems, and dilemmas (Karatasou, 2020). In Kouppanou's works, there are also often anti-heroes, evolving through constant questioning and hardship (Ioannidou, 2018). With the depictions of struggles, deaths, loneliness and other everyday problems, Kouppanou enters gently the psychic world of her heroes, avoiding melodrama and the barriers of stereotypes (Karatasou, 2020).

With her visits in schools, her academic and research work, with publications on philosophy, literature, and literacies, Kouppanou promotes the importance of literature, the love of reading, and literacies in Cyprus –especially, the art of creative writing. With the column she keeps in the prestigious literary magazine "Chartis" [Χάρτης], she gives prominence to children's and young adult literature. She has interviewed philosophers and writers from Cyprus, Greece, and from all over the world, such as Bernard Stiegler, Andri Snaer Magnason, and many others. She contributes to Greek Cypriot teachers' professional learning, and through her professional capacity and her capacity as an author, she gives lectures and organizes workshops and conferences, concerning the teaching of children's literature, offered to people of all ages.

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4. One or two appreciative essays, interviews, or articles

4.a. Appreciative essay by Professor Katerina Karatasou Changing worlds/Changing the world: An introduction to Anna Kouppanou's children's and young peoples' literature

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Introduction

Anna Kouppanou, with her celebrated body of literary work and her daring fiction in the fields of children's and young adult's literature, is the most versatile author and the main representative of the literary generation of 2000 –namely, of the new generation of Greek Cypriot writers, currently renewing children's literature in the country. Her books move in the realm of the postmodern, while her writing allows for the convergence and mixture of literary genres. Her work, either situated in the land of fantasy (*Aria Changes Worlds*, 2003; *The Dwarf Who Fell in Love with Snow White*, 2005; *Santa Claus Wants a Present*, 2008; *The Argonauts of Time*, 2009; *The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore*, 2015; *The Day we Broke the World - The Lost Kids Club, Vol. 1*, 2019; *In the Heart of Darkness and beyond - The Lost Kids Club, Vol. 2*, 2019) or located in the area of realist fiction (*Rivers change... And the mystery of the red shoes*, 2016; *The disappearance of K. Papadakou and what happened that summer*, 2017; *Grandpa, Superman and a Little Cherry*, 2018; *Phoebus and the Whale*, 2021, *Lena and the Bee*, 2022), arise out of a complex fictional poetics, challenging the linearity of narrative and the closeness of meaning, while acknowledging the active role of semantic composition that unfolds in the experience of reading –indeed, allowing the active participation of the reader. Apart from the convergence of writing and reading, Kouppanou's books are also founded on polyphony and on the main characteristics of the novel –in the Bakhtinian sense of the term. In what comes next, I will first discuss Kouppanou's fantasy and then move on her realist fiction.

Following Ariadne's thread into time and space

Kouppanou's literary work intertwines literary genres and narrative techniques. It is characterized by intertextual composition that allows the narrative to unfold like a web of conversational threads, extending from the classic texts of children's literature to various philosophical and theoretical sources and traditions (phenomenology, existentialism, metaphysics, posthumanism, second worlds, etc.). Her work also weaves together sources from the literary canon, mythology, and pop culture, as they often relate to topics from science, such as the nature of space-time, quantum physics, and the multiverse. This takes place with Kouppanou's very first book, *Aria changes worlds* (2003), where the writer offers a contemporary treatment of the myth of Aria (Ariadne) –allowing the story to become hers (belonging both to the female protagonist and to the writer) and not Theseus'. In this coming-of-age story, Aria, a young girl with quite relatable problems concerning her physical appearance and personal identity, is caught up in a journey moving her between worlds changing because of her, while Aria herself is changed by the journey through these worlds. Kouppanou enters children's literature with this first book, written at the age of twenty-one, and which has brought her the 1st Prize in the Competition for Contemporary Fairy-tale of Cyprus IBBY for 2001. The book combines elements from different genres, such as fairy tale and adventure, and with narrative techniques relating to humor, different motifs, and modes.

The feminist connotations of the first book are echoed quite strongly in Kouppanou's book, *The Dwarf who fell in love with Snow White*, which is a very successful reworking of the classic fairy tale, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Here, the dwarfs have their own histories, names, narrative space to be developed as characters, but also the autonomy of action within the narrative plot. One of the dwarfs is Freddy, who is passionate about music and dancing. He will meet Snow White, fall in love with her, and together will form a close friendship. The protagonist, here, however is Snow White, as a young woman of ambition. Snow White wants to break away from the stereotypical expectations of her gender and position, wishing to study and become a doctor. With the dwarfs, and especially in the figure of the oldest one, she will find a mentor, while at a later stage Doctor Prince will promise to help her with her dreams.

These promises will prove false. Snow White will then leave him and run to save Freddy in his hour of need. Both Freddy and Snow White will realize that they cannot depend on others for their self-actualization. They will also understand that they need to work on themselves, in order to become truly open and truly love each other. Matters of disability, humanism, and posthumanism, feminism, autonomy, gender and identity come into play with this clever rewrite of the classic story.

Santa Clause wants a Gift (2008), is Kouppanou's first illustrated book. It is a contemporary fairy tale starring little Angelina, and a wonderful Santa Claus who, similarly to any child or perhaps to every other human being, wants what is right – a present for Christmas. He brings presents every year, but no one thinks of him. With this book, Kouppanou moves along similar paths with the Snow-White adaptation, problematizing the notion of gift, social action, and the responsibility of caring.

Moving back to longform, *The Argonauts of Time* (2009), won Kouppanou the Republic of Cyprus State Award in the category of Literature for Young Adult, while the book was shortlisted for the literary magazine *The Reader's* Award, in the category of Literature for Young Adult Book. *The Argonauts* tell the story of Sonja Jones, a girl living in Scotland, and of Hercules Olympious, a boy living in Rhodes, Greece. Both youths have dark and complicated family histories, and they meet online. The commonalities between them are not exhausted, however, here. They will soon find out that they belong to a new generation of Olympian descendants, bearing names and abilities, similar to those of the first heroes of the Argonaut campaign, and that they will take on their own extremely difficult mission – that is, to preserve the integrity of the historical timeline. They will also need to protect the three gemstones of time from a hidden sect of the Malta Knights aspiring to change the route of history. With the unfolding of the story, people lose their lives and fierce clashes take place. However, the young heroine, Sonja, (Son/ja – Ja/son), the newest version of Jason, and young Hercules, will lead Argo the new generation of Argonauts to victory. In short, *The Argonauts of Time*, offers a narrative that weaves together historical and fictional events, constructing coincidences with meaning, meshing Scottish legends with Greek mythology, old with new love, mythology with history, adventure with mystery. The

narrative also features abandoned babies of mysterious origin, evil characters who turn out to be good, and good ones that turn out to be sinister. The book also touches upon the mystery/detective plot, while subverting gender stereotypes. The book, *The Argonauts*, finally, combine narrative motifs and genres with ingenuity and freshness, while implicating topics concerning the idea of controlling time, time ramifications, and time connections.

The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore (2015) is the book, which brought Kouppanou the most awards and accolades. It has won the Republic of Cyprus State Award for Young Adult Literature 2016, the 1st prize of the Competition for Contemporary Fairy-tale of the Cyprus IBBY (2013), the Award for Children's Book of the literary magazine "O Anagnostis" (The Reader, 2016), and it was included in the honorary list of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY Honor List 2018). The book stars Sebastian Montefiore, an eccentric young man, a risk analyst working in a large company, living a life free of risk and imagination. Sebastian makes an incredible discovery: Dogs can think, express what they feel, and speak the language of humans, following a scientific project conducted by Dr. Thomas to 'improve' them. The government that gave Dr. Thomas this task is behind a shocking conspiracy to control dogs but also society at large: fake news, manipulation of social events, fabricated images, directed television, exploitation of fear of the unknown. Dogs will revolt, claim respect and their rights. The famous blind pianist Cecilia, daughter of Dr. Jones and Sebastian's neighbor, will stand by them. After the initial shock, Sebastian, will prove to be a person of integrity and a defender of dogs' rights. The characters will face many political issues and existential dilemmas: *Should the truth be told at all costs and, above all, how do we recognize it when we find it? If we use the means of our opponents, do we become them?*

In Kouppanou's, *The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore*, fantasy writing introduces a radical political critique of the present day through allegory, science fiction and dystopia. In particular, the book deals with the way through which power controls representations (and therefore the domain of the real) and determines identities. The book also explores something that can prove valuable for readers –that is, the

mechanisms that build pockets of resistance and autonomy, and it does so in an enjoyable, comprehensible, and not at all simplistic way (Ioannidou, Xenii and Iliopoulos, 2015). It is one of the author's books, which intertwinds fantasy with realism, while exhibiting an impressive analysis of social depth! From this point of view, the book illuminates, a more general feature of Kouppanou's writing: Her fantasy writing, maintaining close ties with social reality and with our existential and cultural truths, invites young readers, according to book critic, Apostolos Pappos (2015), to participate in 'thinking process that forge remarkable and interesting paths about the nature of reality, true alliances, friendships, shared commitments, justice, and about the nature of decisions and dilemmas. This is a process that all the characters undergo. The reader follows them without realizing the process, asking at the same time: "What should I do? Every decision I make involves a risk, and it can go against other decisions, against logic, against emotions".'

Turning now to Kouppanou's fantasy series (The Lost Kids Club) and to its first volume, *The Day We Broke the World* (2019), we see that the writer's preoccupation with time and space, with the world, its nature and the possibility to change it, comes to the fore once again. What is more, the story builds an entire fictional world without exhaustively describing it; illuminating some of this world's territories, while leaving others to be deduced by the reader. This is the way the book enchants us. The place, the people, the heroes, and the objects of the story claim an independent existence, endowed with their own past, present and future. This is an almost neomaterialist approach in Kouppanou's writing –revealing the agency of things and objects, but above all, the multidimensionality of the book's heroine, Lizzie Green.

The undisputed protagonist of the series, Lizzie Green, does not control the stories of the other characters. Still, Lizzy has a rich and enigmatic past: It remains a mystery for the reader, but also for Lizzy herself. This fruitful and liberating distance between the existence of the fictional self and their self-knowledge has special significance and value. Lizzy has a labyrinthine psychological life and a future that she longs to unravel. So, do we! Her past, her internal life and future are given neither linearly nor in their entirety nor from a point of view from which the reader can exclaim 'oh, yes... now I

understand, I have caught up with you and with all the other mysteries that you come upon and attract' –because this is not the case with Lizzie. In fact, the heroine does not seem to be able to say such a thing herself. With both the illuminated and the hidden parts of her world, Lizzy wins you over again and again!

With the latest addition to *The Lost Kids Club Series*, titled *In the Heart of Darkness and beyond* (2022), Kouppanou weaves the fantastical into the sociopolitical, while adding depth to her multidimensional characters that begin to change and grow, while gaining new human and superhuman strengths. In this second installment of the series, a very ancient thread of evil, connected to the rise of neofascism, is looming over the world, attempting to erase the memories inscribed on things and ancient monuments, leaving people vulnerable to evil. As book critic, Yota Kefala (2022), comments: 'Kouppanou's heroes face forces residing beyond human knowledge and dare to deal with evil, to clash with oblivion, to restore people's memories, to make people remember their pain and sorrow, since '[t]hese feelings, even if they are not so beautiful, make our world human. Pain makes us human (p. 216).' In this way, Kefala, continues: 'The author touches upon many issues of concern for modern societies, such as, the revival of racism –resurfacing because of people's short-sighted memory, climate change –for which, humans are the main culprit, and the value of historical knowledge, friendship and love'.

In short, I need to underline that Kouppanou's fantasy writing makes good use of multiple social, ideological, and aesthetic discourses that establish kaleidoscopic fictional worlds. Her writing is edgy, youthful, and at the same time mature; reflectively fictional and socially sensitive; rooted in a well-understood locality but also involved with the cosmopolitan and the universal. Next, I turn to Kouppanou's work in realistic fiction.

Following the thread of writing into change

In *Rivers Change... And the Mystery of the Red Shoes* (2016), Kouppanou tells the story of Arto, a small boy living in Indonesia, in love with the river that passes in front of his house, and in awe of his English teacher, Mr. Stephens, and of course his teacher's

bright red ‘LIFE’ sneakers. The book also tells the story of Antigone, a little girl living on the other side of the planet, who herself is enamored with the ‘LIFE’ brand, wishing for a pair of these expensive training shoes, even though the ones she now owns are absolutely fine. Antigone thinks that there is no problem throwing away her shoes as they can be recycled. Both kids are up for some revelations. Arto, taken on a trip with his class, by Mr. Stephens, will discover firsthand how ‘LIFE’ shoes are manufactured – that is, by children’s labor, causing damage to the environment – even to Arto’s beloved river. Antigone will also come to realize that something is terribly wrong with throwing away perfectly wearable shoes, just so that she can fit in with her football playmates. The book is quite fresh in the ways that it builds up mystery and brings to the fore different children’s outlook on things –indeed, placing the characters and their respective dilemmas in specific cultural contexts. The story also masterfully employs the narrative perspective, cleverly setting its plot, and ultimately becoming an exemplary representative of truly remarkable green literature!

Kouppanou’s book *Grandpa, Superman, and a Little Cherry* (Kedros Publications) has been honored by the Women’s Literary Fellowship in 2013 and was published in 2018. The protagonist of the story, Timotheos, is an unexpected character, not because fictional grandfathers are a rare commodity, but because Kouppanou’s grandfather stands out from the stereotypical figure of grandpa. Timotheo’s daughter is expecting a child and his life begins to change dramatically, but not in the usual way – not in the way that grandfathers are usually portrayed, that is, as waiting for the offspring (preferably a boy), who is going to continue the family name. Rather, the story conveys Timotheos’ feelings and deep sentiments, his experiences of insecurity and uncertainty about his future role, but also about his concern about the rules that a good grandfather should obey by. After all, Timotheos does not want to be a usual grandpa, but rather the best grandpa –a real super-grandpa. Timotheos’ constant and anxious reflections bring to the fore the value of each family member and role (father, future grandfather, daughter, son-in-law, spouses). Timotheos is full of innocence and passion for life. He has also a fresh outlook, making him the type of grandfather that all young readers would like to have! Along the way, Timotheos will meet a little boy who needs adult care and support, and through this friendship both Timotheos and the book’s little

readers will find out that a good person does not care only for their own, but rather about all the people in the world. Any person can be my person, and everybody needs care. The novel is a bildungsroman –one, in which the main character enters an apprenticeship, allowing him to unlearn whatever is conventional, individualistic, patriarchal and ‘old-fashioned’ about his new family/social role.

The Disappearance of K. Papadakou and what happened that summer (2017) is perhaps Kouppanou’s most impressive narrative work. It was shortlisted for the Republic of Cyprus State Award for Young Adult Literature, the Hellenic Republic State Award for Children’s Book, the Greek IBBY Award for Novel for Young Adults, and the “O Anagnostis” (The Reader) Literary Magazine Award for Children’s Book, while it has repeatedly enticed specialized literary criticism. The protagonist of the story is a teenager, Alexis Sotiriadis, who is pressured by his family situation for so many reasons: he has lost his beloved aunt Antigone, his father is in prison, his lawyer-mother works non-stop, trying to acquit her husband. Alexis’ dealings with his friends are not easy either. He harbors feelings of bitterness towards Petros, for something he once told him, and he is also in love with Marisa but does not know what to do about it. In general, Alexis does not understand his feelings, not even if he has them. In this way, Alexis experiences multiple types of ‘disappearance’ in his life. Still, he chooses to focus on the disappearance of his favorite author, Myrsini Nefeli K. Papadakou, and on the fourth installment of her series, which is long awaited and yet not yet published. Alexis assigns himself the mission to find Papadakou and also to find out what is going on with the fourth book. Marissa and Petros are his companions on this journey. Together, they will face dangers, the intricacies of first love, the impasses and glorious victories in the arena of understanding themselves and others, and their different positionalities. In this young adult novel, the detective and thriller genres are closely tied together, constituting the other side of a whole other series of mysteries, such as the mystery of one’s self, the self’s connections to others, and the fragmentary narratives through which we try to understand our lives. For all these reasons, the book has a strong self-referential character, addressing the nature and the construction of narrative itself. Indeed, the detective plot proves to be a spacious arena for ideological hybridization,

incorporating elements from biography and autobiography, essay writing and journaling, epistolary writing and fairy tale, coming of age stories and bildungsroman.

Phoebus and the Whale (2021) is one of Kouppanou's recent literary work, a return to short form, a genre that the author does not visit often –unfortunately, judging by the masterpiece that this book is. This particular illustrated book (to be precise, this picture book) unfolds narratively around the questions 'What happens when fear is too great? What happens when it no longer fits inside you and when you can no longer suffer it?' Phoebus, the little hero of the story, is very scared. He does not suffer from a specific childhood phobia, for example, a phobia about the dark or some animal, etc. Rather, Phoebus's fear is one of those fears that takes the upper hand and overwhelms any child and any human being. We sometimes say: 'my fear overflowed'. Somehow this is Phoebus' fear. At school, Phoebus' teacher talks about marine mammals. The huge whale, the blue whale, attracts the hero's attention, magnetizing him. He takes cartons and blue paper and builds his own blue whale. When his girlfriend, Rosie, asks him about what he is making, Phoebus explains that he is creating his fear. As he gives shape to his fear, and as he shares his artistic creation with others, Phoebus is filled with other emotions that put fear aside. *Phoebus and the Whale* is a short story, quite different from the usual publications, concerned with overcoming negative emotions. In a simple and at the same time quite deep –in fact, almost wise way, Kouppanou writes a story about the transformation of fear and about the stage at which the artist finds themselves before realizing their own identity.

Remaining with short form, Kouppanou's latest book *Lena and the Bee* (2022) revisits the topic of children's emotional lives and tackles the great topic of love. Lena is a small girl. She feels small and yearns to grow big and tall –to think great thoughts and to speak great words. She also yearns to make sure that her family loves her and that their love for her is great. One day, however, Mum says that her love for Lena is small, very small. Small like a teardrop and as little as a bee. Lena is at first startled. An abstract from the book:

Really, Mum? Is love truly small?” Lena asked once more. “Yes, it’s tiny like a slim ray of sun breathing life into a seed. It’s small like a ring that binds two lives together. It’s light as a feather. Love is small like a honey-making bee, that sweetens your sorrows, stings your little fingers. It is small like butterfly kisses. Love is small like a heartbeat, a tiny little drum under your little heart.

The book does not only discuss the question of love, but in general matters of scale and magnitude, which are quite important for young children, the very matter of raising questions that help us lead our lives, and the cycle of life itself. The book follows Lena till the end of her life, when she finds the answers she was looking for and finally learns about self-love and self-acceptance. So, as Giannis Papadatos (2022) asserts: ‘This is a uniquely poetic book of short form, with philosophical, social and humanistic, ecological, cosmological and magical realism connotations –one of those books which are rarely written.’

By way of conclusion

Anna Kouppanou’s literary work in the field of children’s and youth literature is rich and renowned. Her books have won numerous awards from major institutions, as well as from prestigious literary magazines. With exceptional insight and artistry, the author respects and innovatively represents children’s and young people’s voices. Kouppanou also constructs these children’s distinctive understandings of the world, while her stories address issues, which are of concern for young people –indeed, relating to current contexts of family, school, and social life. Themes and values are defined narratively, but only from the different perspectives of these characters. Every heroine and every hero have their own story to tell. Kouppanou’s heroines and heroes are born out of great love and are bursting with life. This is the reason that any kind of agenda is absent from Kouppanou’s work.

Kouppanou’s books are also multidimensional and ideologically bold. Her texts combine and transcend discrete genres. The foundational modalities of imagination, adventure, humor, and realism are combined in an apt and functionally aesthetic way. A multitude of narrative genres are ingeniously hybridized in Kouppanou’s stories.

Detective plot, mystery, science fiction, dystopia, diary, fairy tale, fantasy novel, coming of age stories, parody, mythological novel, literary dream, green literature, are some of these genres. In fact, there is a rare intertextual current running through Kouppanou's work, which nevertheless avoids becoming 'academic' or weakening the role of the reader. On the contrary, this energy illuminates and strengthens the narrative force of her stories.

Kouppanou's texts respect children readers. They ask questions and are multidimensional. They are also deeply thoughtful and at the same time open and relatable. Kouppanou's books address the major issues of today in a combinatory mode –each with a different intensity and emphasis, as befits the particular plot of the book, in which they are the subject. These issues have to do with gender identities, the human and the posthuman, technology, nature, and culture, adulthood and childhood, friendship, love, fear, the social existence of human and more-than-human-beings, social justice and social inequality.

Kouppanou's multi-thematic books, about the world of today and tomorrow, do not sacrifice good fiction to good intentions about the social. Her books, instead, capture the readers' interests, activating feelings of curiosity, suspense, and surprise, pushing them to ask questions, to think, to imagine and to cultivate their critical and reflective thinking. Kouppanou's heroes change worlds; her stories change well-known stories; her books long for world change!

The scope and breath of Anna's work can certainly be approached parametrically through its main features: ideological and narrative hybridization, youthful gaze, a new perception of the world that pushes adult censorship to the corner. Kouppanou's body of work also exhibits density of thought, originality and thus interesting narratives, polyphonic organization of fictional worlds – and of the novels in general – multifaceted literary dialogue, and her amazingly characteristic writing voice –her specific unique style! For this reason, I think it impossible for a reader not to recognize one of Kouppanou's books. Anna has construed her writing style, which is of course

evolving, but is certainly her own –and that is another reason that she has shown a body of work and not simply a series of individual books.

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4.b. Anna Kouppanou's Interview to Apostolos Pappos for Elniplex

Pappos, A. and Kouppanou, A. (2023) Anna Kouppanou: 'With the loss of memory, we are forced to passively accept a predetermined life'.

<https://www.elnplex.com/%ce%ac%ce%bd%ce%bd%ce%b1-%ce%ba%ce%bf%cf%85%cf%80%cf%80%ce%ac%ce%bd%ce%bf%cf%85-%cf%83%cf%85%ce%bd%ce%ad%ce%bd%cf%84%ce%b5%cf%85%ce%be%ce%b7-elnplex/>

How is to move from fantasy and young adult readership to picture books and child readers?

I think this move is the result of my maturity as a writer. It also comes from a certain desire to say something important, to share with children something that I have come to know about life during these years that I have been inhabiting this planet. From this perspective, this also a big stake; to manage to convey that which is most valuable to me in a few words.

Lena and the Bee

Children have a strange relationship with magnitude. They are impressed by enormous and imposing things. How did you spot this concern and particularity in children's thought? Did this realization inspire a certain part of your story?

Yes, it was an observation about the importance of scale and magnitude in childhood. I believe that what is big and what is small intersects with what is a child –in fact, in a very radical way. What does it mean to be small or big? What does it mean that I can reach something that is at a very high place? What does it mean that I can see what grownups can see? It is for this reason, that children will always be enchanted by giant and tiny beings. This game of big and small is part of children's existential condition.

I am under the impression that this is the first time that your writing is so poetic. Is it a choice or did you happen to find yourself on this path? What is your relationship with poetry, really?

The reality is that poetry is my first path. It is the road that I have always traveled, even though I publish rarely. In 2013, my poetry collection ‘The poetry of things –We are looking at the view alone’ (*Πραγμάτω(ν) ποίηση: Βλέπουμε την θέα μόνοι, Εκδόσεις: Μελάρι*), came out. Since then, I keep writing and collecting material for a second collection. Poetry is the house in which I dwell and where I entertain my guests. For this reason, it plays an important role in my creative writing workshops. I see poetry as the way to negotiate with ourselves and the way we express it. For all these reasons, poetry colors this book, as well.

Lena and the Bee does so many things. It attempts to sketch that which is love, to stress children’s need to define love, to measure it and to express it. Did you intend for all this?

Yes! All these matters were among the things that I thought about. However, I do not think that only children have the need to deal with love –we all do. We all have the need to feel it, to bring it close, to touch it. Perhaps the questions that the little protagonist poses (Do you love me? Is your love for me great?) are indicative of this endeavor that often takes place in vain. This is because there might be no words that really define love; there might only be our capacity to feel it. If we have this capacity, we are lucky.

At the same time, I have noticed the important role of that the agonizing and ever so charming cycle of life plays in the book. The cycle of life and death makes the human being that tragic being that knows about the imminence of death. How do we make this cycle and this condition known to children?

I have been discussing this subject with many fellow teachers. However, the cycle of life is always here; it is our only certainty. Life contains death and death presupposes life. The problem arises, when we deny our human condition and when we are forced to talk to children after the fact, after a certain kind of loss has already been experienced.

On the flip side, if children intuit through a book that love is never lost, that love remains even after the death of a loved one, then they come to find a certain relief.

Does old age scare you?

For some reason, I don't really think about it. Now that I watch the first wrinkles to turn up on my face, I welcome them as friends. Wrinkles are friends that I gained with a lot of effort. I understand them as some kind of transference of my internal dialogue on the outside. They are the marks of a continuous psychological reality that is evolving.

The Club of the Lost Kids

There are two book is the series. How many more shall we wait for? Do you know?

There is certainly one coming, perhaps two.

Tell me how did you decide to go into fantasy?

I didn't decide such a thing! It was something that just happened. I don't make plans when it comes to writing. And even though I don't really read this genre, my mind always takes me there, to the question 'what if?' It is in a certain way a type of philosophical thinking that leads into fantasy.

I find the connections that you make between fantasy, reality, and science quite unique. Can you talk about this?

In the books of the Lost Kids Club, I wanted to create a convincing narrative, to invite readers to suspend their disbelief towards the magic realm or to open a door towards the magical through a new entryway –through, the transformative power of science.

Are you concerned by the loss of memory, its selectivity, or the damage done to it?

Is it a true thread to humanity?

Yes, it is something that troubles me. Without memory, or by inhibiting only in the short-term cycle of the media, we cannot learn. We cannot imagine alternative futures. With the loss of memory, we are forced to passively accept a predetermined life.

How do myths and fairy tales affect the development of your stories?

I like to return to the feeling of wonder and puzzlement that myths create –sometimes even if only to re-experience the feeling and confirm that the world can be re-enchanted once again.

Young people look for their identity, this is after all what teenagers are all about. What can we do as parents, as educators and as a society for them?

Well, first of all we need to realize that enforcing our own ‘wants’ and desires makes it harder for young people. Children and young people find themselves in a process of self-formation. They do not discover identities; they construct them. And we need to help them make decisions that allow them to become what they want. We, as adults, inhabit an ambivalent zone involving children. For this reason, we need to be close enough, so that children and young people feel safe, and also far enough, so that they don’t feel overwhelmed by us.

What would you say to someone who is feeling lost?

I would say to them that this is a perfectly good opportunity to be found. This does not suggest that they need to find a lost version of themselves. Instead, they can proceed to a restructuring that allows the emergence of a new self.

Thank you.

Thank you, as well.

5. List of awards and other distinctions

1. **Kouppanou, A. (2021). Phoebus and the Whale** [O Fivos kai I Falaina], Athens, Patakis. (picture book)
 - Shortlisted for The Reader [O Anagnostis] Literary Magazine Award for Children’s Book (2022)
 - Shortlisted for the National Award for Children’s Book, Republic of Cyprus (2022)
 - Shortlisted for the National Award for Children’s Book, Republic of Greece (2022)
 - Shortlisted for the Greek IBBY Award for Children’s Book (2022)

2. **Kouppanou, A. (2019). The Day that We Broke the World – The Lost Kids Club: Volume 1** [Ti mera pou spasame ton kosmo – To Club ton Hamenon], Athens, Patakis. (young adult)
 - Shortlisted for The Reader [O Anagnostis] Literary Magazine Award for Young Adult Book (2020)
 - Shortlisted for the National Award for Young Adult literature, Republic of Cyprus (2020)

3. **Kouppanou, A. (2018). Grandpa, Superman and a Little Cherry** [O pappous, o Superman kai ena Kerasaki], Athens, Kedros. (children’s book)
 - Shortlisted for the National Award for Young Adult literature, Republic of Cyprus (2019)
 - Commendation from the Womens’ Literary Fellowship (as an unpublished book; 2013)

4. **Kouppanou, A. (2017). The disappearance of K. Papadakou and What Happened that Summer** [I eksafanisi tis K. Papadakou], Athens, Patakis. (young adult)

- Shortlisted for The Reader [O Anagnostis] Literary Magazine Award for Children's Book (2018)
 - Shortlisted for the National Award for Young Adult Literature, Republic of Cyprus (2018)
 - Shortlisted for the National Award for Children's Book, Republic of Greece (2019)
 - Shortlisted for the Greek IBBY Award for Novel for Young Adults (2018)
- 5. Kouppanou, A. (2015). The Amazing Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore [I apistefti anakalipsi tou Sebastian Montefiore], Athens: Kedros and Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus (young adult)**
- IBBY Honour List (2018)
 - The Reader [O Anagnostis] Literary Magazine Award for Children's' Book (2016)
 - State Award for Young Adult Literature, Republic of Cyprus (2016)
 - First prize, Competition for Contemporary Fairy-tale, Cyprus Association of Children's and Young Adult Book – Cyprus IBBY (as an unpublished book; 2013)
- 6. Kouppanou, A. (2009). The Argonauts of time [I Argonautes tou Hronou]. Athens: Kedros (young adult)**
- State Award for Young Adult Literature, Republic of Cyprus (2010)
 - Shortlisted for The Reader [O Anagnostis] Literary Magazine Award for Young Adult Book (2010)
- 7. Kouppanou, A. (2007). Santa Wants A Present [O Agios Vasilis thelei doru]. Nicosia: Parga Publications. (childrens' book)**
- Shortlisted for the National Award for Children's Book, Republic of Cyprus (2008)

- 8. Kouppanou, A. (2003). Aria changes Worlds [I Aria allazei kosmous].**
Nicosia: Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus. (childrens' book)
- First prize, Competition for Contemporary Fairy-tale, Cyprus Association of Children's and Young Adult Book – Cyprus IBBY (as an unpublished book; 2001)
 - First prize, Jean Monet Competition for Young European Authors (2003)



6. Complete bibliography of the books for children and young people by Anna Kouppanou

1. Kouppanou, A. (2022). *Lena and the Bee* [H Lena kai h melissa], Athens, Patakis. (picture book)
2. Kouppanou, A. (2022). *In the Heart of Darkness and beyond - The Lost Kids Club: Volume 2* [Sto skotadi ton skotadion kai Akoma paraperera - To Club ton Hamenon], Athens, Patakis. (young adult)
3. Kouppanou, A. (2021). *Phoebus and the Whale* [O Fivos kai I Falaina], Athens, Patakis. (picture book)
4. Kouppanou, A. (2019). *The Day that We Broke the World – The Lost Kids Club: Volume 1* [Ti mera pou spasame ton kosmo – To Club ton Hamenon], Athens, Patakis. (young adults' book)
5. Kouppanou, A. (2018). *Grandpa, Superman and a Little Cherry* [O pappous, o Superman kai ena Kerasaki], Athens, Kedros. (children's book)
6. Kouppanou, A. (2017). *The disappearance of K. Papadakou and What Happened that Summer* [I eksafanisi tis K. Papadakou], Athens, Patakis. (young adult)
7. Kouppanou, A. (2016). *Rivers may Change... And the mystery of the red shoes* [Na to parei to potami... Kai To mistirio ton Kokkinon Papoutsion], Cyprus CYBC. (children's book)
8. Kouppanou, A. (2015). *The Amazing Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore* [I apistefiti anakalipsi tou Sebastian Montefiore], Athens: Kedros and Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus (young adult)

9. Kouppanou, A. (2009). *The Argonauts of time* [I Argonautes tou Hronou]. Athens: Kedros (young adult)

10. Kouppanou, A. (2007). *Santa Wants A Present* [O Agios Vasilis thelei doro]. Nicosia: Parga Publications. (childrens' book)

11. Kouppanou, A. (2005). *The Dwarf who fell in love with Snow White* [O nanos pou agapise ti Hionati]. Athens: Mikri Militos. (childrens' book)

12. Kouppanou, A. (2003). *Aria changes Worlds* [I Aria allazei kosmous]. Nicosia: Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus. (childrens' book)

7. Ten of the most important titles by Anna Kouppanou

1. **Kouppanou, A. (2022).** *Lena and the Bee* [H Lena kai h melissa], Athens, Patakis. (picture book)
2. **Kouppanou, A. (2021).** *Phoebus and the Whale* [O Fivos kai I Falaina], Athens, Patakis. (picture book)
3. **Kouppanou, A. (2022).** *In the Heart of Darkness and beyond - The Lost Kids Club: Volume 2* [Sto skotadi ton skotadion kai Akoma parapera – To Club ton Hamenon], Athens, Patakis. (young adult)
4. **Kouppanou, A. (2019).** *The Day that We Broke the World - The Lost Kids Club: Volume 1* [Ti mera pou spasame ton kosmo - To Club ton Hamenon], Athens, Patakis. (young adult)
5. **Kouppanou, A. (2017)** *The disappearance of K. Papadakou and What Happened that Summer* [I eksafanisi tis K. Papadakou], Athens, Patakis. (young adult)
6. **Kouppanou, A. (2016).** *Rivers may Change... And the mystery of the red shoes* [Na to parei to potami... Kai To mistirio ton Kokkinon Papoutsion], Cyprus CYBC. (children's book)
7. **Kouppanou, A. (2015).** *The Amazing Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore* [I apistefti anakalipsi tou Sebastian Montefiore],

Athens: Kedros and Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus
(young adult)

8. **Kouppanou, A. (2009).** *The Argonauts of time* [I Argonautes tou Hronou]. Athens: Kedros (young adults' book)

9. **Kouppanou, A. (2005).** *The Dwarf who fell in love with Snow White* [O nanos pou agapise ti Hionati]. Athens: Mikri Militos.
(childrens' book)

10. **Kouppanou, A. (2003).** *Aria changes Worlds* [I Aria allazei kosmous]. Nicosia: Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus.
(childrens' book)

8. List of the five representative books sent to the Jury

1. **Kouppanou, A. (2022).** *Lena and the Bee* [H Lena kai h melissa], Athens, Patakis. (picture book) (Illustrations: Effie Lada)
2. **Kouppanou, A. (2021).** *Phoebus and the Whale* [O Fivos kai I Falaina], Athens, Patakis. (picture book) (Illustrations: Kelly Matathia-Kovo)
3. **Kouppanou, A. (2019).** *The Day that We Broke the World – The Lost Kids Club: Volume 1* [Ti mera pou spasame ton kosmo – To Club ton Hamenon], Athens, Patakis. (young adult) (Illustrations: Maria Thymi)
4. **Kouppanou, A. (2017).** *The disappearance of K. Papadakou and What Happened that Summer* [I eksafanisi tis K. Papadakou], Athens, Patakis. (young adult) (Illustrations: Daniela Stamatiadi)
5. **Kouppanou, A. (2015).** *The Amazing Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore* [I apistefti anakalipsi tou Sebastian Montefiore], Athens: Kedros and Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus (young adult) (Illustrations: Despina Manolarou)

9. Published reviews of the books submitted to the Jury

1. Kouppanou, A. (2015). *The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore [I Apistefti Apokalipsi tou Sebastian Montefiore]*, Athens: Kedros

Review 1: By Elena Ioannidou, Elena Xenii, and Vangelis Iliopoulos

The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore by Anna Kouppanou [I apistefti apokalipsi tou Sempastian Monrefiore tis Annas Kouppanou] (July 2, 2015), *Kathimerini*. Online:
<https://www.kathimerini.com.cy/gr/politismos/biblio/211849/?ctype=ar> (last accessed 25 January 2021)

A new publication in the *Children's and Young Adult Literature* series of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation.

The new publication in the *Children's and Young Adult Literature* series by Anna Kouppanou, titled 'The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore' has been released. The book, which is co-published by the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation and Kedros Publishers, won first prize in the Competition for Contemporary Fairytale of the Cyprus IBBY in 2013 and was illustrated by Despina Manolarou, who won first prize in the book's illustration competition of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation in 2014.

Sebastian Montefiore, a risk analyst and amateur lawn barber, hears something he does not want to hear and sees something he does not want to believe. All the characters in the book face certain dilemmas and will have to decide how the story should go on and how our world should go forward. Some people want revelations and others do not. Some will manically try to hide the truth and others will fight till the end to share it. There are plenty of books with a dog as the main character. This book though, wonders

how something like this could happen. It puts its characters, Maximilian Discovery, Josephine, Cecilia Thomas and the Marvelous George, through the greatest of troubles, crammed between military tanks, protests, enchanting melodies and television studios, and asks: ‘Who can find the truth and who can actually listen to it?’

Some critical comments on the book:

Elena Ioannidou, Associate Professor, University of Cyprus

The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore is a children’s book that relates to classics, like *Animal Farm* by G. Orwell, *The Last Black Cat* and *Froutopia* by E. Trivizas. In all three books, there is the human world that possesses power and authority and oppresses everyone else, whomever they may be. Also, in all three books the diversity of the oppressed is highlighted, both in terms of resources as well as in terms of thoughts and minds, while the subject of revolution is brought to the fore. Kouppanou’s book balances between myth, fantasy and allegory and addresses key political issues: equality, justice, sharing of resources and representation, all the while remaining a book for children or people who are children at heart. The author clearly proves that you can write about social issues, by offering children space to develop critical thinking and language, while having some fun and enjoying it.

Elena Xenii, Special Teaching Staff, University of Cyprus

The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore is a piece of exceptional literature, a term that may not have been sufficiently defined yet, but still refers to honor, pride, responsibility, and commitment. This book carries responsibility and commitment for ensuring the continuous enrichment of local literature with quality, originality, and opportunities for reflection. It also carries responsibility and commitment, because Kouppanou continues to ‘uncover the paths covered in shrubs and weed’. Writer George Panayiotakis suggests in a recent survey of *The Reader* literary magazine that the qualities of a good book ‘may be odd and uncertain, but at the same time they can awaken the desire for wondering’ or, as the title of the book suggests, for “discoveries”.

Vangelis Eliopoulos, President of IBBY Greece

In her book *The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore*, Anna Kouppanou enchants young readers with her writing and takes them on a journey to worlds of literary enjoyment. This book deals with numerous current issues, for which not even adults have answers. The way the author approaches them, that is, by including them in the plot, does not ‘burden’ children with troubles incompatible with their age, and it does not lean towards moral teaching. On the contrary, it helps them become tomorrow’s critically thinking citizens. Relationships within modern family and society, animal rights, the reality of television, which is projected to us as the real life, and so many other current issues will help children to think critically. Isn’t this what real literature should do? Well, Anna Kouppanou writes real literature.

Review 2: By Apostolos Pappos

Pappos, A. (2015) *The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore* by Anna Kouppanou [I Apistefi Apokalipsi tou Sempastian Montefiori], *Elniplex*. Online: <https://cutt.ly/7j7pRt8> (last accessed 25 January 2021)

Sebastian Montefiore’s job is a rare one. He is a risk analyst. A client goes to him, wanting to discuss his plans about opening a business with such and such products. Sebastian takes the numbers, the statistics and data, and he calculates the risk of such a move. He is exceptionally good at his job. However, when one day he listens to something that he is not supposed to listen and sees something that is truly unbelievable, everything in his life changes forever. Dogs can talk! Dogs can think! Dogs want rights! Dogs have a meeting in a warehouse at the harbour to start a revolution against humans! Wouldn’t such a thing be a threat to humanity? Sebastian is a human, not a dog. So, he needs to do everything to prevent dogs’ plans. He must save the world. He must be a hero, a superhero, a leader!

Everything begins when two guys attack Sebastian and manage to take the watch that his father had left him. They beat him up, and Sebastian suffers a concussion, losing consciousness. No other human is there to help him. A dog, however, arrives, Maximilian Discovery! From that moment on, Sebastian starts listening to dogs talking,

and he only has seventeen hours to stop their revolution. The dogs have an assembly at a warehouse in order to organise the fight against the humans. Or could things be more complicated? Dr Thomas found out some years ago that the government's plan to train dogs to think and talk, was not so innocent. His daughter, Cecilia, will now attempt to hide the truth from weird and initially naive Sebastian. Will the dogs' revolution turn things upside down for humans or are dogs simply the victims trying to stand next to humanity? And alas... whose side will Sebastian Montefiore take?

Who are we? Who are the others? Could it be that our interests as a species are opposing those of other species? The writer avoids preaching. She does resolve to any emotional animal-loving cries and outbreaks that would cause the readers forced emotional reactions. Rather, she creates an allegorical novel, discussing the true nature of our reality, the different perceptions of the lives of animals, their oppression, their exploitation by humans. She also discusses the systems at place, which take advantage of the animals and distort the truth they want to share with people (star system, showbiz, celebrities, reality shows). Dog's truth gets erased by silly overconsumption. The book comments on television as a means of promoting an artificial reality and claiming the place of 'real' reality, finally manipulating mediocre lives.

Some thoughts and reflections about ethics arise: What are your options when the 'enemy' uses unethical means? In what ways can you convince others about your own truth when the reality forces you to think the others as the 'enemy'? Should the weak and the 'Mute', the helpless, and those who are not developmentally at the same stage as adult humans be protected? Do they have rights? Have people learned to make way for the rest of their cohabitants on the planet, especially the... different ones? What is the role of thinking and knowledge? An abstract from the book:

My name is Anselmo Ignatius and I represent all the dogs that believe that humans made a great mistake –causing such transformation to our nature. You shouldn't have given us the capacity to think. Without thinking, life would have go on as we had always known it, short of pain and problems. The one who doesn't think is a happy being [...].

Through its rich symbolisms, dialogues, and the reflections of the protagonists, the book also examines the nature of thinking, its quality, and the ways in which it can change the life of a being.

Reading “The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore” can lead young readers’, and also, older one, to thinking process that forge remarkable and interesting paths about the nature of reality, true alliances, friendships, shared commitments, justice, and about the nature of decisions and dilemmas. This is a process that all the characters undergo. The reader follows them without realizing the process, asking at the same time: “What should I do? Every decision I make involves a risk, and it can go against other decisions, against logic, against emotions”.

With Sebastian Montefiore, Maximilian Discovery, Josephine, the strange pianist, Cecilia Thomas, and the TV star, Marvelous George, the reader will face their own dilemmas and be prompted to find their own answers, which are not prescribed by the book.

As a person living with a dog every single day and night for the last seven and a half years of my life, I would like to reassure you: dogs can talk and think and of course they have rights. They have the right to have company, a roof over their head, food, walks, water, a family. They just express their needs and claim their rights in their own unique way. The more you are willing to get down and listen to them, the more likely is that you will get Sebastian Montefiore’s concussion, allowing you to start listening to them talking...

Here is an extract, which I adored, and which every reader that loves the art of storytelling will also love:

Tomorrow wasn’t coming soon. Tomorrow wasn’t coming easily. It wasn’t coming at all. Sometimes you need to persevere. To fight with all of your strength, and still tomorrow might never come. Cecilia and Sebastian wanted tomorrow to come. Marvelous George wanted it as well, but every dawn was

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bringing just another today. Again, and again. Emptiness, broken souls, and broken bodies, deafening silence. Every night was delivering ruin and despair.

Anna Kouppanou's book won the first prize in the IBBY Cyprus' Competition for Contemporary Fairytale of the Cyprus IBBY and was illustrated by Despina Manolarou, who won first prize in the book's illustration competition.



2. Kouppanou, A. (2019). *The Day we Broke the World - The Lost Kids Club: Volume 1 [Ti Mera pou Spasame ton Kosmo - To Club ton Hamenon: Tomos 1]*, Athens: Patakis

Review 1: By Georgia Galanopoulou

Galanopoulou, G. (2020), Anna Kouppanou: *The Day we Broke the World [Anna Kouppanou: Ti Mera pou Spasame ton Kosmo]*, *Diastixo*. Online: <https://diastixo.gr/kritikes/efivika/13614-mera-spasame-kosmo> (last accessed 25 January 2021)

What could a contemporary Athenian school, ‘an institution of new methods of education and discipline’ and an ocean liner, which disappeared in the waters of the Atlantic in 1950, have in common? And, how could this lost ship be connected to another one that is vanishing right now, as we speak? According to logic, these two ships cannot be connected in any way. However, when it comes to a fantasy novel, where the author’s ingenuity invents characters capable and willing to connect that which cannot be connected, all these peculiarities, and many others, become possible, arousing curiosity and stimulating creative thinking.

The link between all these oddities is a certain blinking of light. A mysterious blinking light that flickers for a little in the school’s football field and then stops. Everyday, exactly at noon, ‘at twelve past twelve’. A web of actions is woven around this light and brings the main characters together. They become ‘The Club of the Lost Kids’ who manages to ‘break the world’ metaphorically and literally. How and why are they lost though? According to the narrator, who informs us in advance about their ‘fatal and predestined friendship’, this is a question that even they themselves cannot answer. As it is mentioned in the book:

Now, if you asked the lost kids whether they felt losers, as in dorks, none of them would say that they did. However, if you asked them whether they felt lost, because they suddenly found themselves, and without knowing the reason,

in a new school, just because their parents thought it best for them to attend a school that used to be a museum and it was now filled with gifted students and scientists from around the country, well, then they would definitely say ‘yes’. Yes, they were lost in the translation of a play without a title. In fact, it was them that they would give the title, but they did not know that yet. That is why they felt lost, lost like birds in the ocean depths; lost like pieces of cheap coal in a safe deposit box; lost like polar bears on a Caribbean Island.

None of the ‘lost kids’ has been chosen at random by the author. Each one of them has what it takes to serve the narrative plot. The self-illuminated Dinos Loulis is a mathematical genius and a model of self-confidence. The lonely Antonis Chrysos is lost in the depths of the school library, where he writes lyrics and listens to songs that speak ‘of dark skies and ominous futures’. The delinquent Stefanos Avgerinos is usually found isolated in the school’s basement, while being the son of the principal and the descendant of the founders of the museum. The multitalented Lizzy Green has recently arrived from the US (she is originally from Salem) and is also multilingual, possessing the power to read and listen to thoughts, even those that belong to people who are not still alive.

With a variety of secondary characters surrounding the protagonists, important social issues come to the surface such as the disintegration of family relationships for the sake of fame, prominence, and professional priorities. Everyone has their role, no one can be spared: the ambitious Dr. Magda Avgerinou who is the mother of Stefanos and the principal of the school, the famous and complacent parents of Antonis, the friendly and modest mother of Dinos, and Lizzy’s protective father who is a professor of linguistics. There are also relatives, classmates, teachers, and school staff, as well as characters who magically appear from the past.

Apart from its masterful narrative, the matching of characters and the tight plot, this is a multilayered groundbreaking novel. Dr. Magda Avgerinou invites students to join clubs to showcase their talents and abilities, so that her school excels in a national competition, but the four ‘lost kids’ have their own priorities. Under the pretext of

tidying up the messy warehouse, they organize a completely surreal club of their own (The Cleaning Club) in the school's basement. After all, this is where the boxes with the collections of the old museum are kept. From that basement, they will try to interpret the mysterious light and decode the signals it emits. An old radio from the time of the German Occupation, an ancient metal Alexandrian cylinder carved with hieroglyphics, family photos of the museum's founders, old newspaper clippings with 1950s articles about a lost ocean liner in the Atlantic Ocean, and the news of the disappearance of another ship in the present complicate their search. Then time ceases to exist, and through a crack, a black hole in the foundations of the school, the past and the present become one.

The book captivates the reader and excites them from the very first page. It is inspired by a variety of ideas, utilized with admirable simplicity, humor, and economy in less than 200 pages. The Ancient Egyptian's views about life, death and eternity, stories about the Bermuda Triangle and the Philadelphia Experiment, scientific views about space and time, and theories about black holes leading to parallel universes are just a few of these ideas. All of these are combined with philosophical theories where the past coexists with the present.

Anna Koupanou received several prestigious awards in Greece and Cyprus for her work in literature for children and young adults. She also works as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Cyprus and publishes regularly on philosophy of education, philosophy of technology and literature theory. Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to assume that her new book is, among other things, an attempt to present temporality in ways that can be comprehended by both children and adolescents.

This is a novel belonging to a series in which imagination, narrative comfort, personal style, subtle irony, and of course humor transform what is strange and inexplicable into lightness and fun - turning curiosity for the outcome to anticipation.

Review 2: By Yota Kefala

Kos Voice (2020) The Magic World of Children's book: Young Adult books (The Day we Broke the World) [O Magikos Kosmos tou Pedikou vivliou: Vivlia gia efivous (Ti Mera pou Spasame ton Kosmo)], *Kos Voice*. Online: <https://cutt.ly/Ti7iiny> (last accessed 25 January 2021)

This first book of a fantasy series by Anna Kouppanou transports four teenagers from their present-day model school in Athens to an adventure in space and time. In the book's 186 pages young readers follow its heroes on a mystery journey, encountering theories about space, time, and black holes, and exploring fascinating connections between the present and the past.

The story begins on the 29th of November at the Anthopyrgos Model School, a school that 'applies all the new methods of pedagogy and discipline' and accepts talented children from all over the country. On this day, the four teenagers, the 'lost kids', who according to the author, may not have even realized that they belonged to the 'lost kids' Club, begin to form their friendships. Dinos Loulis, who lives with his mother, is a mathematician and has a business-oriented mind. Antonis Chrysos is the son of a famous pop singer and a renowned dancer who do not pay any attention to him. Stefanos Avgerinos is the son of the Anthopyrgos Model School principal, Martha Avgerinou. He is also a delinquency legend after flooding his former school and then trying to burn down his mother's school. Lizzy Green is the new student who moves from America and speaks so many languages that leaves her classmates speechless. However, as it is revealed later, Lizzy's greatest gift is her ability to listen to the voices of people who lived in the past and to enter their lives.

The group is brought together by a strange light that appears in the school's football field at exactly twelve past twelve. The first to notice are Dinos and Lizzy, and this knowledge brings them close to each other. Soon, the other two boys will join them. The flickering light, as it turns out, is an SOS message in Morse code. The four teenagers decide to set up a School Club for Cleanliness, which will allow them to get

together in order to solve the riddle, which is connected to the school's warehouse and the history of Stefanos' family.

Who is then sending this distress signal? What is the role of the metal cylinder with the hieroglyphic writing 'The game of death - The eternity of life' on its case? How does the shipwreck of Sir Lancelot in 1950 relate to the shipwreck of the Broad Sea that happened that November? How are the two girls, Nefeli Foka and Nancy Sotiropoulou, connected to each other? What is the secret that Lizzy Green does not know and how will it change everyone's lives? Many questions and many more adventures await the four young protagonists of the book. Together, they embark on a journey that will lead them to a rift in time and bring the past and the present together. What will happen next, and how will everything unfold? We will probably need to wait until the second book of the series to come out!

Apart from the main protagonists, the book introduces a number of other characters: Stefanos's cold and arrogant father, Ioannis Polyvios, and his ambitious mother, Dr. Martha Avgerinou, who are preoccupied with their personal ambitions and have stopped listening to their son's needs. There is also the kind Mr. Pelopidas, the old caretaker of the school, who shares a beautiful love story with the four teenagers, and of course Lizzy Green's aunt who reveals to her the strange fate of their family, causing many troubles as she brings Lizzy face to face with her mother's past.

With this first book of the trilogy, the author whets the appetite of young readers for that which will follow. The plot develops between reality and fantasy and the narrative is vibrant, full of emotion, humor and teenage thoughts and concerns. Furthermore, the author manages to talk about theories of philosophy and physics in an extremely comprehensible way, without resorting to didacticism.

The heroes, who are completely different from each other, must deal with their own issues and insecurities and they are sometimes lost in their own quests. An adolescent universe comes alive through their personal thoughts and the discussions they share.

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So, brace yourselves for a trip to the day the four friends broke the world and – who knows? – you may also discover that, as Manos, the talented football player and classmate of the heroes, did, that ‘life is more interesting out there, outside of mathematics’.



3. Kouppanou, A. (2017). *The Disappearance of K. Papadaku and what happened that summer [I Eksafanisi tis K. Papadaku ke ti egine ekino to kalokeri]*, Athens: Patakis

Review 1: By Eleni Svoronou

Svoronou, E. (2017) *The disappearance of K. Papadaku or The adventure of writing and life [I eksafanisi tis K. Papadaku i I peripetia tis grafis kai tis zois]*, *The Reader*. Online: <https://cutt.ly/bj7aDev> (last accessed 25 January 2021).

Anna Kouppanou, a writer from Cyprus, has a strong presence in the field of children's and young adult literature. Her previous two books, 'The Argonauts of Time' and 'The Incredible Discovery of Sebastian Montefiore' received the State Award for Young Adult Literature of the Republic of Cyprus in 2010 and 2016, respectively. The latter also received The Reader's Award for Children's Book. Her new book, 'The Disappearance of K. Papadaku and what happened that summer' not only does it meet the expectations set by the author's previous works, but rather raises the bar even higher.

Alexis Sotiriadis, a 14-year-old boy, with a particular temperament, perhaps on the autism spectrum – even though, nothing of the sort is mentioned in the book, is in the process of spending his summer in his hometown of Athens. Alexis, however, has a lot more to deal with – more than the heat, the boredom, and the loneliness of the city. His father is in jail, his aunt, who was helping the family, has left, and his mother, a very busy lawyer, does not seem to have time for her son. The messages she constantly sends him contain instructions for the creative use of his free time. At the same time, she arranges for the obnoxious Petros to come and join him. Petros brings Marisa along, and things become even more complicated.

Alexis desperately wants only one thing; to find out why Myrsini–Nefeli K. Papadaku, the author of the books 'Water. Me', 'Heaven. You' and 'Earth. She' has not yet published her fourth book, as it was announced. 'Fire' would be the title of the next

book. Papadakou is consistent with her readers. She publishes a book every three years on the 22nd of June, Alexis' birthday. So, what went wrong? Why the book is not out yet?

The mystery does not end here. Papadakou's fourth title seems problematic. A word is missing, according to her previous titles. The publishing house refuses to give any information, and Alexis decides to take matters on his own hands. But what is it that makes the protagonist so desperate for this book and its writer? Papadakou's books weave together the thread that connects Alexis with his father and his aunt, two persons he adores and who were forcibly removed from his life. His father introduced these books to him and his aunt continued reading them with him, and now Alexis feels orphaned, both of a father and of stories.

In his quest to locate Papadakou, who carefully has taken all precautions to conceal her identity and place of residence, Alexis has two companions, Petros and Marissa, who although they were a 'mandatory' company imposed on him by his mum, prove to be the best investigation team. Marissa's attractiveness and strong character make Petros and Alexis potential antagonists. However, what keeps this team together is Marissa's and Petros willingness to help Alexis at every step of his dangerous mission.

The construction of this book's plot is ingenious and the resolution of the mystery does not disappoint. However, what makes this book special is the weaving of the plot, the writing style, and the book's multileveled narrative. Closing the relatively short book, 157 pages which are read in one sitting, the reader might still wonder what they have read: a fascinating mystery novel, an emotional coming-of-age story, an anthem to life - no matter how hard it can get, an exploration of complex human relationships, or a self-referential story about storytelling? This is because the hidden protagonist of this book is writing itself.

With her writing, which carefully leaves traces and gives the reader one clue at a time, the author creates three-dimensional heroes, offers plot twists, misleads the reader, asking them to test their own certainties, avoids stereotypes and moves without exhorting emotions. In this way, Kouppanou offers a masterclass on how to write a

good story. Her writing has emotion, but she does not attempt to demonstrate her skill. She loves her hero, but she does not go easy on him. She helps him to realize his delusions, but also to appreciate his strengths. None of the characters of the book are who they seem to be. They all turn out to be different. Because that is the way people are –multidimensional.

The narrative and the focus of the story illuminate the adventure of writing as well. What is the meaning of writing a book or, more simply, what does it mean to tell a story? Is it just a personal matter? How do we synthesize the notes, the scattered pieces of our lives, into a narrative? How do people relate to each other through listening to or through reading a story, and how do they relate with the author of the story? Papadakou is the multidimensional function of storytelling. She is Heaven, Water, Earth, and she is Fire! And there is no end to it. We look forward to Papadakou's/ Kouppanou's next book.

Review 2: By Andreas Kounios

Kounios, A. (July 21, 2017) *The Disappearance of K. Papadakou and what happened that summer* [I Eksafanisis tis K. Papadakou kai ti eagine ekino to kalokeri], *Aletheia*, p. 19.

Anna Kouppanou's clever, in fact, brilliant writing spirit unfolds in this book, capturing young reader's attention. Personally, I believe that *The Disappearance of K. Papadakou and what happened that summer* is a book for adults as well, that is, of adults who still feel like children or try to feel like children in their own baffling everyday life.

The main characters in this fascinating novel are Alexis, who is curious as a cat and extremely stubborn, Peter, who is cool and settled, and Marissa, who struggles to maintain a balance between the two of them, usually without much success.

Kouppanou adds mystery in her story that increases gradually as in every good detective novel. Who on earth is Papadakou and what is her real name? Is it possible that she has

two names? If she has two names, then why not three? Why hasn't she published her fourth book on time as she did with her previous three? Why is this fourth book simply titled 'Fire'? Are we right to assume that where there's smoke, there's also fire? And what about Antigone? What is going on with sweet Antigone who stood by Alexis in his difficult times?

Besides her unique writing style, Anna Kouppanou masterfully builds a fascinating plot; nothing excessive, many surprises and unexpected turns, and interesting secondary characters that cause mixed feelings. Humor is also a key element in this book; the dialogues especially between Alexis and Peter spread laughter and add a comedic tone to certain parts of the novel.

4. Kouppanou, A. (2020) *Phoebus and the Whale* [O Phivos kai h phalaina], Athens, Patakis. (picture book)

Review 1: By Georgia Karantona

Taming your fear Or How to turn fear into a picture (2020)

Online: <https://www.fractalart.gr/damazontas-ton-fovo-i-pos-na-kaneis-ton-fovo-zografia/>

The topic of fear has been an integral part of fairy tales and of oral folk tradition. Children's lullabies are full of stories of horror and violence, stories that keep haunting children's minds up until adulthood. Author Charles Dickens constitutes an exemplary case of fear's prominent place in childhood, as he himself confessed that the fairy tales his nurse told him before falling asleep, traumatized him, contributing to the construction of a dark corner in his mind. This notion of fear seems also to have seeped into contemporary culture, with films such as Disney's *Frozen II* reproducing and addressing these issues.

Even though many authors have carefully dealt with the theme of representing fear, contemporary books for children follow the trend of turning something scary into something fun, encoding thus an optimistic and pleasant message. Many of these books even subvert the stereotype of the good and bad animal with notable example the book, *The Gruffalo* (1999), where the little mouse uses his wisdom to scare a fox, an owl, a snake, and the fearsome Gruffalo.

The feeling of fear has not only been a concern of writers and illustrators but also of researchers internationally. In fact, the power that books have to improve children's psychological development and help them dealing with fear and phobias has been documented by research conducted at the University of Illinois in 2014. Through the utilization of the book *Uncle Lightfoot, Flip That Switch: Overcoming Fear of the Dark* (2014) and accompanying educational activities, the researchers observed encouraging results in combating fear through bibliotherapy.

Phoebus and the Whale (Pataki Publications, 2021) by Anna Kouppanou, the Cypriot candidate for the 2022 Hans Christian Andersen Award, and award-winning illustrator Kelly Matathia-Kovo is among the books dealing with the feeling of fear. The title, of course, does not invoke in the least the theme of the book. However, the title is not accidental at all: in fact, the title along with the cover allows the readers to find meaning. It also marks the transitional stage that the hero goes through, travelling from ignorance to knowledge, and from fear to courage.

The author quite intelligently chooses the name Phoebus (Φοῖβος), which is the ancient Greek name for the god of Light and Music, Apollo. Φοῖβος also ties musically with its paronym word for (quasi-homophone) fear (Φόβος/[Phobia]) and the name for the whale (Φάλαινα). The name of the small protagonist, along with fear, also functions as a contrasting pair, evident from the first riveting spread of the book that introduces the readers to the central theme. The black and white binary format, a technique dominating both children's books and graphic novels in recent years, allows children-readers to perceive the emotional state of the characters in a quite easy way.

The black background introduces the young readers to the theme of the book: in the mind of the young child, black is linked to darkness, but also to something vague, elusive, and undefined. The contrast between black and white is craftily intensified at the bottom right corner of the page, where a single word appears: "He was afraid (Φοβόταν)". A single word. Still, all children understand this word. Contrary to the international current trend in children's literature dealing mainly with the fear of the darkness – such as *The Darkness* (2014), *Orion and the Darkness* (2014) or the most recent *The King Who Banned Darkness* (2018) – this book presents fear as a broader concept, referring to the fear of darkness, to social anxiety, and to school phobia.

The hero of the book, young Phoebus, cannot delineate his fear and this is structurally important for the narrative function. This inability disturbs Phoebus' mental wellbeing, something that is reflected in the sad expression of his face, in his anxious and bewildered look. The illustrator succeeds in highlighting the magnitude of fear by masterfully unifying two spreads: Phoebus's fear is so great that it emerges like a huge

wave from the book that Phoebus is reading, and it is then merged into the river of the next spread.

But how is fear intertwined with the largest mammal on earth, the blue whale? The whale as a creature of the animal kingdom has inspired terror and awe, appearing in early forms of fairy tales, such as the Brothers Grimm's *The Crystal Ball*, but also in stories, such as Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, the story of *Pinocchio*, Eugene Triviza's, *The Whale that ate War* (2007), while appearing in books of the last five years, such as *Noi and the Whale* (2018) or *The Whale and the Snail* (2018). Straddling between magical realism and fantasy, the well-known image of the whale emerging from the sea, cutting the sea vertically, is another pictorial apparatus, used artfully and in an inventive way by Kelly Matathia-Kovo. Placed in a surrealist key image, the whale is hypostasized into a mammal-apartment-building, perfectly camouflaged in the starry night cityscape, with Phoebus sitting on the wing of the mammal, invoking the boy's determination to confront his fear. The smaller animals lined up on the same spread are depicted in white – as a parallel element of referentiality, contributing to a comparative framing of fear, bringing an end to the hero's escalating state of mind. The illustrator seems to have studied the actual size of the animals as well as the size and characteristics of the blue whale, in order to faithfully capture them on a pictorial level.

How will then Phoebus free himself from the shackles of fear and how will he move towards courage? Moving between fear and phobias, Phoebus sketches his fear, so that he tames it, assuming thus the role of the book's illustrator, creating in this way an illustration within an illustration. Phoebus heals himself, comes to know himself and his limits, conquering the Apollonian "know thyself". Freud believed that dreams are best expressed through images. He also believed that drawing is a therapeutic method, whilst Lowenfeld discussed how images expresses the way children see the world, feel and think. Phoebus' conscious decision to capture his fear in an attempt to confront it constitutes at the same time an attempt to overcome his limits and to confront himself. "Look fear in the eye and fear will go away", wrote Nikos Kazantzakis in his Report to Greco. My fear "is so big that I cannot contain it any longer", explains Phoebus to his

friend Rozi, admiring his own depiction of his fear –in fact, with a proud smirk on his lips.

The road to self-knowledge is not a lonely one for Phoebus. At this Street of the Brave, Phoebus' finds fellow travelers and supporters in his friend Rozie and in his community. This is a type of society that sympathizes, following him on his way to freedom. The book, also, touches indirectly upon issues of multiculturalism by representing different ethnicities, winking at the adult reader.

The transition from fear to courage is illuminated by the absolute harmony between text and illustration, taking place in two ways. The first way has to do with the play of colors. In the black spread, we have gradually the addition of white color. Later, the color palette will expand impressively into warm pastel colors, while employing blue tones inspired by the Greek nautical landscape, such as sky blue, emerald, and marine blue. Phoebus engages in an attempt to confront his fear, while the illustrator highlights the complexity of this attempt by means of the color palette of the aquatic ecosystems. Even the river image does not escape this attempt. The second way through which the transition from fear to courage is depicted has to do with the gradual addition of the text by the author herself: from the one-word phrasing “he was afraid (Φοβόταν)”, Kouppanou gradually adds the textual tissue, ending up in a rich narrative ensemble.

The last spread subverts the stereotype of fear's magnitude. The depiction of the fear-whale inevitably prompts us to compare fear to the whale's size, while the close-up of the fear-whale lends a human dimension to fear. At the last goodbye, the proud, brave Phoebus sheds his sad and frightened expression, while a smile of relief is etched on his face.

The further the fear-whale moves away the smaller it seems to get and the more liberating Phoebus feels. He begins approaching life in a new and different way, which is no longer defined by fear, providing the opportunity to adult readers to recall their own traumatic experiences during their own childhood. The book is itself an hymn to

the power of books and learning, since the knowledge Phoebus gets about leads him to liberation and to the externalization of fear.

The book lends itself to a variety of creative classroom activities concerning fear. Children can draw their own fear, choosing its color and size, and they can even give their fear a name. Children can also ask questions about fear's favorite food, toy, or song. What is fear scared of? Children create a story regarding their fear. They can dramatize the story or give a different ending to it. They can write a fear-themed haiku or draw the whale or even their own fear as a sketch poetry/ideogram. At the same time, the book lends itself to a discussion about music. What musical instrument would fear play? Children can discover associations between the god Apollo and the book. If children create a book about their fear, what title would they give it? What colors would they use? At the end, children can create clay hats in the shape of their fear, paint them in the color of their fear and act out a new story. Through the visual representation of their fear or of other emotional states, children can face their fear creatively and inventively, using techniques such as dialogue, painting and dramatization.

This is a multi-layered book touching on so much more than the topic of fear. It is a book about bravery, courage, determination, self-awareness, friendship, but it is also a book about learning, creativity, and the love of reading. This is book that will win over young and old readers alike.

Review 2: By Anta Katsiki-Guivalou (Professor at National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

Phoebus and the Whale by Anna Kouppanou

Online: <https://bookpress.gr/kritikes/biblia-gia-paidia-efibous/13829-o-foivos-kai-i-falaina-tis-annas-koupanou-paidikoi-fovoi-logotexnia-gia-paidia>

Anna Kouppanou's book, *Phoebus and the Whale*, addresses the feeling of fear that young children experience in many everyday life occasions, and it does so in an original, psychologically documented, and narratively attractive and playful way.

Childhood fear as appearing in children's books has concerned many experts, child psychologists, child psychiatrists, sociologists, educationalists, and authors of children's literature alike.

Thirty-three years have passed since the first edition of Maro Loizou's emblematic book *Katerina and the Invisible in the dark* (1988). This and three more books by Loizou, illustrated by Vangelis Pavlidis, are perhaps the first texts of children's literature discussing childhood fear, doing it so in fact in a very successful way.

Since then, many books, both in Greek and in other languages, have been published on the topic. Besides the fear of darkness, children's books also address the fear of social life (bullying and domestic violence), the lack of self-confidence, but also the fear of monsters, dragons, and other creatures, which symbolize various phobic and anxious situations caused by unknown and hostile environments.

Anna Kouppanou handles the topic of childhood fear thoughtfully and in ways that liberate children from the unpleasantness of the feeling, encouraging them to even play with it. This allows children to familiarize themselves and deal with the feeling effectively. The whole process of liberation unfolds in a gradual and multimodal way, while the excellent illustrations by Kelly Matathia-Kovo work towards this effect.

The visual introduction to the feeling of fear takes place through the grey-black and dark-blue colors on the book's cover. Still, the book cover does not simply invoke fear, but also suggests ways to escape it, through the bright windows of the illustrated houses and the whale-apartment-building capturing the magnitude of fear. The name of Phoebus, written in red letters, as well as the depiction of the character with fun colors also functions as a counterpoint to fear. This already "frightening environment" is intensified in the book's first spread, where the color black is prominent in the page, whilst the small piece of text, the verb "He was afraid [Φοβόταν]" is written in white. However, in the following page the "black light", as George Seferis would have said, begins to dissolve through the "angelic" white. In fact, as Phoebus opens the door to the dark basement, the white color invades the black page.

The narrative continues with incidents from a young child's everyday life (solving math problems at school, playing basketball), while the emphasis on the enormity of fear and the difficulty of getting rid of it is also underlined. Here, I think, lays the originality of the author's treatment of the subject. Fear, any fear, and more specifically fear as the blue whale, is greater than the places familiar to Phoebus, as is the local river. Fear is even bigger than his favorite people, such as his grandfather. Thus, the protagonist is gradually led to face his fears alone, albeit with the much-needed support of his best friend, Rozie.

The blue whale that enters the narrative organically during a lesson about mammals, is presented both through the textual and optical narrative: "The whale is huge, gigantic, awesome!". Phoebus begins to come to terms with this ultimate symbol of fear, depicted by the illustrator in an imposing but not threatening way. Phoebus begins to objectify his fear, literally turning it into an object, constructing a blue whale out of cardboards, painting it, and placing all of his things – his bed, his cat, the flowers of his garden, his papers, all of his world in it. In this way, fear comes out of Phoebus and can be faced from a distance.

Kouppanou's choice of this active and practical way of eliminating fear constitutes, I think, another evidence of the book's originality. Additionally, the fact that Phoebus' community participates in his act of liberation, becomes a testament to his accomplishment. I think that the send-off of the whale-fear, as found in the words uttered by the protagonist himself, emphasizes his great achievement: "And why do you want to let your fear go?" asked an old man with a monocle. "Because it doesn't fit in my heart anymore" answered Phoebus quietly. "Farewell, blue whale" he then said.

The harmonious and dialogical play of text and image, the presentation of the concept of fear with the choice of the specific choices of words (whale/[Φάλαινα] and Pheobus [Φοίβος]) and the alliteration of the letter (ph/f/[φ]), the gradual revelation of the plot with the presentation of the responding feelings of the characters, the richness of the imagery, and the sharpness of the text are the main traits of this illustrated story. These

elements allow this book to engage the emotional, psychological, and cognitive worlds of children-readers. This book can also help build children's self-confidence, allowing them to face the inevitable difficulties of their lives.

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5. Kouppanou, A. (2022) *Lena and the Bee* [H Lena kai h melissa], Athens, Patakis. (picture book)

Review 1: By Eleni Beteinaki

Beteinaki, E. (2022), *Lena and the bee... A book of empathy, self-awareness, fulfillment and completion. Cretalive gr. Online: <https://www.cretalive.gr/politismos/i-lena-kai-i-melissa?fbclid=IwAR2ZECKUJWRUp7JYhRnCXbCkxRqsjApMFOTBpkiUJD EUPinjvxFUs0Qc-Qw> (last accessed 2 January 2022)*

Lena is a little girl, full of questions about love and life. Everyone tells her that she will grow up one day, that she will become bigger than the sea, the whale, and their love, bigger than the red scarf, the wind, and their love, bigger than the bicycle, and the road, and the love that joins them.

Lena stands in front of the mirror, observing herself, eager to grow up, wondering about the love that her grandmother, grandfather, father, and mother have for her. All of them describe their love for her with beautiful words and feelings, big, small, huge, and true. Lena, however, struggles to understand her mother's love, which as she tells her is hidden in the small but also quite important things: Mother says to Lena that her love: 'It's small like a ring that binds two lives together. It's light as a feather. Love is small like a honey-making bee that sweetens all your sorrows, stings your little fingers, and feels like butterfly kisses. It's small like a heartbeat, a tiny little drum under your little heart'.

Mum's words bring joy and laughter to Lena's heart and soul "And Lena's laughter resounds across the world, and the world shrunk into a marble in her tiny hands".

And then the years go by, and Lena finally grows up, reaching her grandmother's age. And then she looks in the mirror again and begins to wonder once more about love and about her very being. Lena puts herself in the shoes of others and understands so much.

A lot of philosophical questions, posed with the beginning of Lena's life and with the start of the narrative, find their answers with the book's ending. This book is truly a poem written by Anna Kouppanou. It discusses love, the purpose of our existence, the small and big questions of life. It is a small book about great philosophical issues. A book about the emotions hidden in small and big things. The magnitudes that have a different meaning for everyone.

Using a different perspective, Anna Kouppanou attempts to talk to her readers about the biggest and the smallest of feelings –that is, love. We are all looking for it, we find it everywhere, even if we don't understand it sometimes. We never stop asking others about their love for us.

A book about empathy, self-awareness, fulfillment, and completion. It presents the cycle of life in a different way. The mirror functions as a symbol that seems to answer the difficult questions of existence and of difficult small and big emotions, such as love.

A very philosophical book for young and adult readers, illustrated with great sensitivity and aesthetics, by Effie Lada. Lada's illustrations react to the text powerfully and deeply, adding depth to emotion, creating a stunning publication well worth seeking out.

Review 2: By Giannis S. Papadatos (Associate Professor at the Aegean University, Children's Literature Critic]

Anna Kouppanou: "Lena and the bee" Online:

<https://diastixo.gr/kritikes/paidika/19310-koupanou-melissa> (November 19, 2022 - last accessed 2 January 2022)

Is it possible for a short-form book, a picture-book for young children to contain that many important discussions about feelings, life-scenarios, and all of these being signified by water and light, air and earth, and their coming together in unity? What about love? With her questions, little Lena proves that such a book can exist! All important things may begin from the quite simple ones, those able to discuss all the

important and big issues –the child begins to create with these basic cognitive concepts of magnitude (big and small) from infancy. After all, the child can form abstract mental figures from a very young age and progressively through the acquisition of language. I mention these facts precisely to underline that ‘Lena and the Bee’ “plays” with the concepts of “small and big” – namely, a game that belongs to the child’s world and everyday games. Children listen to these words, when others refer to them and describe them, and in often in contradictory ways (e.g., you are too young for... - you are too old now for... etc.).

I turn now to the narrative of the book: Little Lena worries if her loved ones really love her. Her grandfather, grandmother, and her father, invoking images, which are more or less familiar to the little girl (e.g., animals, things, concepts, elements of nature), explain that their love is as great as the water that quenches thirst, greater than the love that the wind and the open road share, and that love gives comfort, hope, and joy. Her mother, however, says that her love is as small as a sunbeam; small as the bee that sweetens Lena’s sorrows. She also tells her that her love will last forever. As the book shows, love is small, because there are so many big things starting small in life.

When the little girl grows up and becomes a grandmother herself, she “sees” her mother, who has already left, telling her that love comes from everywhere and from nothing. Looking at her now ‘big/adult’ self in the mirror, Lena now sees herself younger, reaching out her arms, holding herself tight, telling her younger self that love is big and small. Then, Lena realizes that the love she was giving and receiving from the world was true.

I turn now to the polysemy of the book’s ideology. The narrative uses concepts such as small-big (from material and tangible reality), always-nothing, before-after. These concepts are deeply philosophical, emerging from a touching story, baring social, humanist, and at the same time ecological and, I dare say, cosmogonic connotations. The social aspect of the story has to do with the little girl’s family and the family that she later creates as an adult. It is also humanist, addressing Lena’s ambiguous love for the world. It is ecological, as it turns to various examples of death and regeneration

from nature. The story is also cosmogonic as all four cosmogonic elements, especially as iterated in the pre-Socratic philosophy of Empedocles, are present in the book. Finally, the mirror has a decisive position in the ideology of the book, since it has been traditionally understood as a “divining” tool and as a gateway to another, symbolic world.

I conclude with the stylistics of the narrative: This is a book that proves that you can say a lot, and indeed great things, to very young children, in an understandable and above all in a highly literary way, without a trace of didacticism. Just like the mirror reflecting truths with its metaphysical and symbolic meaning, the poetic style of the text gives form to the concept of boundless love. The bee is also emblematic. It is the primordial symbol of sanctity and fertility of thought, industriousness, art, and kindness.

Finally, I will discuss something which is rarely found in a picture book: the lyrical way of the narrative offers a touch of magical realism. The departed figure of the heroine’s mother appears as an element that belongs to the sphere of reality. So does, her child-self, reaching out from the other side of the mirror. I need to also underline here that magical realism belongs to realism and is based on the presentation of the real, with integrated unreal or magical elements –precisely, presented as if these elements were real. This results to the fact that neither the hero, the heroine in this case, nor the reader wonder about the reality of these elements. Effie Lada’s illustration fits harmoniously with the sensitivity and the style of the text. An excerpt from the book:

“Really, Mum? Is love truly small?” Lena asked once more. “Yes, it’s tiny like a slim ray of sun breathing life into a seed. It’s small like a ring that binds two lives together. It’s light as a feather. Love is small like a honey-making bee, that sweetens all your sorrows, stings your little fingers, and feels like butterfly kisses. It’s small like a heartbeat, a tiny little drum under your little heart”.

So, indeed, without doubt or exaggeration, this is a uniquely poetic book of short form, with philosophical, social, humanistic, ecological, cosmological, and magical realism connotations –one of those books which are rarely written.

Anna Kouppanou belongs to that generation of Cypriot writers who deservedly continue the work of great authors, such as: Maria Pyliotou, Maria Avraamidou, Elli Paionidou, Eugenia Palaiologou-Petronda, Filisa Hatzihanna, Kikas Pulcheriou, Spyros Epaminondas, Toulas Kakoullis, etc. So far, her work is remarkable and multi-awarded. Some of her relatively recent books are the novels *The Disappearance of K. Papadakou* and *What Happened That Summer*, *The Day We Broke the World*, the sequel, *The heart of darkness and beyond*, and the picture book, *Phoebus and the Whale*.

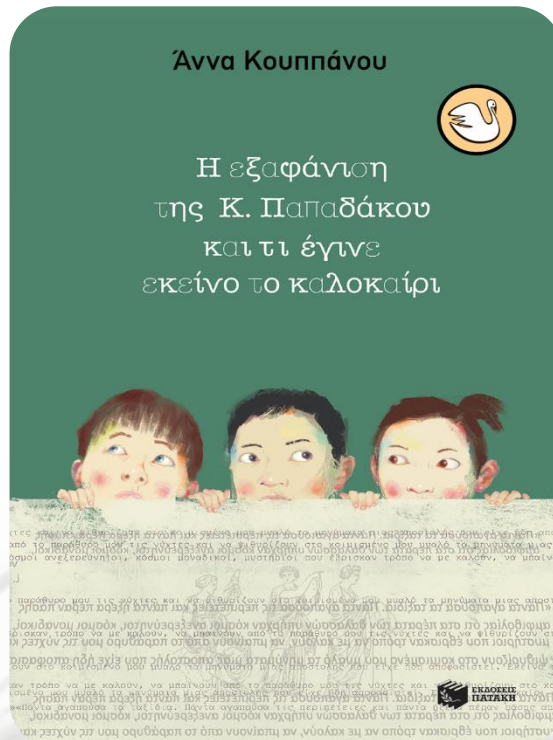
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10. Reproductions of book covers and illustrations

*The Disappearance
 of K. Papadaku and
 what happened
 that summer*



The Day We Broke the World



In the Heart of Darkness and beyond

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Phoebus and the Whale



Lena and the Bee

11. Promoting the Love of Reading, Through School Visits, the Organization Of Children's Literature Conference, the Network of Schools Promoting the Love of Reading

School Visits





Organization Of the First Children's Literature Conference



Network of Schools Promoting the Love of Reading



