

VOL 47, NO. 2 APRIL 2009



# Bookbird



A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

*Critically reading the word and the world*

*Edgar Valter: Estonia's master of imagination*

*Being one of "Them"*

*Spotlight on Josefine Ottesen*

*Stories for children in Angola*

*Australia's past in picture books*

*From victory to victimization in China*



INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**IBBY**

# Bookbird

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

*I said it in Hebrew – I said it in Dutch –  
I said it in German and Greek:  
But I wholly forgot (and it vexes me much)  
That English is what you must speak!*

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The quoted stanza is from 'The Hunting of the Snark' by Lewis Carroll. The titles of the various *Bookbird* sections are taken from that same poem, from 'The Walrus and the Carpenter', also by Lewis Carroll, and from 'The Owl and the Pussycat' by Edward Lear.

# Editorial

## *Bookbird* editors



SYLVIA VARDELL is a professor at Texas Woman's University (USA) where she teaches graduate courses in children's literature. She is the author of *CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN ACTION: A LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE* and the PoetryForChildren blog.



CATHERINE KURKJIAN is a professor in the Department of Reading and Language Arts at Central Connecticut State University (USA) where she teaches courses in Reading and Language Arts and Children's Literature. Her areas of specialization include children's literature, and the intersection of literacy and technology.

CIAO  
*Annyong haseyo*  
Griezi  
Salaam  
SHALOM  
Barev  
Goeie dag  
Nín hảo



Dear *Bookbird* Readers,

We are honored to take on the stewardship of *Bookbird* as its new editors. We offer our heartfelt thanks and admiration to Valerie and Siobhán for their extraordinary talent and skill in making *Bookbird* the outstanding journal that it is today. We will work to maintain and build on the multiple perspectives and voices from around the world already in evidence in *Bookbird*, as well as strive to maintain its literary and artistic qualities.

We use the term “stewardship” because we understand that the editorship of *Bookbird* has been entrusted to us for only a moment in time. Call it kismet, destiny or just coincidence; we believe that what we have done individually and collectively prepares us for this new and exciting challenge; that we are in the right place at the right time. We are deeply committed to and passionate about our work as editors of *Bookbird*. We also recognize that we are one part of IBBY's international mission and Jella Lepman's legacy of providing children with access to books around the world, especially in developing countries.

### Feature articles

This first issue of our editorship presents literature from five continents and while each piece is unique to its specific cultural context, we find a convergence and intersection of themes that surface in this collection. One theme that ribbons through this set of articles relates to the key role that stories from multiple perspectives play in developing culturally sensitive global citizens. Sometimes we are looking from the inside-out from our personal frame of reference and cultural identity as discussed in Kathy Short's *Critically Reading the Word and the World: Building Intercultural Understanding through Literature*. At other times we are looking from the outside-in through a window into another cultural perspective as presented in Mare Müürsepp's *Edgar Valter: Estonia's*

*Master of Art and Imagination in Picture Books.* In any case, the articles in this issue speak to the value of story in promoting the appreciation and understanding of the self and others.

The role of stories as a shaper of identity and as a means to map our inner and outer landscapes is another theme that surfaces frequently in this issue as well. Clearly this theme is powerfully addressed in Josefine Ottesen's *The Story of History: Being One of "Them."* Ottesen uses fantasy as a metaphor to help her readers become aware of and master both their inner and outer demons. The reader is left in awe by the power of stories that can serve to enslave as well as to liberate. Bent Rasmussen outlines Ottesen's contributions to literature in *The Life and Work of Josefine Ottesen.*

While the emphasis of Ottesen's work is on our interior landscapes, Robin Morrow focuses on the exterior. In *Mapping Australia's Past in Picture Books*, she examines four picture books that provide narratives from diverse settings and perspectives and when taken together contribute to an inclusive and richly layered landscape of Australian history.

Like Morrow, Ondjaki maps outer landscapes. In *Let's Share the Dream: Stories for Children in Angola*, he outlines complex historical, social and political factors in shaping cultural identity in the development and rebirth of Angolan children's literature. In the process, the reader can get a taste of Angolan children's literature and of Ondjaki's work as a professional writer of children's books.

Finally, in *From Victory to Victimization: The Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) as Depicted in Chinese Youth Literature*, Minjie Chen speaks to the political nature of literature as a shaper of identity. This article calls for multiple voices and perspectives to create a balanced historical view.

### The departments

We are pleased to report that *Bookbird* maintains continuity in retaining departments and department editors of **Postcards from Around the**

**World, Books on Books** and **Focus IBBY**. Glenna Sloan continues to bring us children's literature from around the globe through brief postcard reviews submitted by a variety of contributors. The featured books include themes that range from war and peace, human rights, human resilience. Other books in the collection portray the sheer delight, mystery and joy of being alive. These book reviews represent a range of genres which include traditional literature, modern fantasy, historical and contemporary fiction, and poetry.

**Postcards** coupled with Christiane Raabe's review of professional books in **Books on Books** provide us with many useful resources. You will find critiques on books about the child/adult stance in children's literature in France, on capturing "memorial culture" and the history of children's literature in Germany, on the relationship of painting and illustration to Russian folklore and history, on the 100 years of *New Zealand School Journal*, and on the scholarly study of fairy tales, myths, and legends from Spain.

Finally, in **Focus IBBY**, Liz Page keeps us up to date on the recently funded Yamada Projects, and describes projects that received awards in 2008. As we travel with her around the world to learn about these projects, it becomes clear that IBBY continues to make a significant difference in the world scene.

### Something new

In putting our personal stamp on *Bookbird* we plan to infuse a bit of international poetry into the journal by highlighting a single poem on the last page of each issue. This time poet J. Patrick Lewis graces us with his most appropriately entitled poem, *Books*.

We hope you enjoy this issue. We look forward to making new friends from around the world, to our work as editors and "stewards" of *Bookbird*, and to collaborating together in furthering IBBY's important mission.

More than one million American and Canadian military personnel have taken part in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and hundreds of thousands of their children have been affected. "In any war," writes Ellis, "it is always the children who are the biggest losers-children whose voices are rarely heard." In this book, some of these children tell, in their own words, how their parents' war experiences have impacted their lives. Some offer advice for others who are living through similar experiences. "Find some way to relieve your stress," says Allison, 11. "You have your own life to live." Ellis is known for frank, courageous books that deal, both factually and fictionally, with the plight of children in developing countries, especially those devastated by war. Here, children themselves remind us how the human cost of war is borne both by the men and women who serve and by their children. The collected voices of these children, by turns scared, funny, angry and loving, make an eloquent statement about the sacrifices that war demands of families. Royalties from *Off to War* are being donated to the Children in Crisis Fund of the International Board on Books for Young People.

Glenna Sloan



Deborah Ellis

*Off to War:*

*Voices of Soldiers' Children*

Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2008

144 pp ISBN 13: 9780888998941

(non-fiction, 9+)

In 2004 and 2005, UNESCO organized a series of workshops for authors, illustrators and publishers of children's books. The goal was to produce a publishable illustrated manuscript dealing with the themes of peace and understanding between peoples. Initiated by Maha Bulos of the Arts and Cultural Division of UNESCO in Paris, the second of these workshops was held in Beirut in 2004 with this book, *Nouqoush Ghareeba* as the result. The story was written by Amal Farah (Egypt), and translated by nine Arab artists: Fadi Adleh (Syria), Intelaq M. Ali and Nadim Koufi (Iraq), Manal Haddadin (Jordan), Omar Khoury, Lena Merhej, Maha Nasrallah, Rima Rifai, and Yasmine Taan (Lebanon). Egyptian artist Ihab Sharker designed the book and supervised the work of the illustrators. The technical producer was Yasmine Taan. In the story, Na'am (Yes in Arabic) finds herself in a book. Amid pages gloriously decorated and inscribed, she finds herself with other words for Na'am, such as Oui and Yes, different shapes expressing one meaning. The text makes a powerful symbolic statement: If only the words could converse, they would see that their various shapes, though different, express one meaning.

Glenna Sloan



*Nouqoush Ghareeba*  
(*Strange Inscriptions*)

Various authors and illustrators  
Division of Arts and Cultural Enterprise,

UNESCO, Paris

24 pp ISBN 929900305x

(picture book, all ages)



*This collaborative project involves teachers in a small public elementary school in Tucson, Arizona in the USA. They examine the pedagogical issues and strategies involved in integrating international literature into the curriculum beyond a “tourist” approach, encouraging close critical reading in developing children’s understandings of culture and the world.*

Building international understanding through children’s and adolescent literature has always been at the heart of IBBY. Jella Lepman fled Nazi persecution in Germany during WW II, returning as a cultural and educational advisor at the end of the war. Her belief that books can build bridges of understanding to unite children of all countries led her to establish IBBY and the International Youth Library. Through literature, children have the opportunity to go beyond a tourist perspective of gaining surface-level information about another culture. They are invited to immerse themselves in story worlds, gaining insights into how people feel, live, and think around the world. They also come to recognize their common humanity as well as to value cultural differences.

*Through literature, children have the opportunity to go beyond a tourist perspective of gaining surface-level information about another culture.*

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# Critically Reading the Word and the World

Building Intercultural Understanding through Literature

by KATHY G. SHORT



Kathy G. Short is a professor in the Department of Language, Reading and Culture at the University of Arizona, and Director of Worlds of Words ([www.wowlit.org](http://www.wowlit.org)).

Lepman's vision of opening the world for children through literature still remains an elusive goal in many schools and libraries. The availability of authentic literature from a range of global cultures varies dramatically from country to country. Even when the books are increasingly available, many educators are not familiar with the books and are uncertain about their cultural authenticity. They are often unsure about how to use the books since many contain unfamiliar stylistic devices and terminology and are about experiences and settings that, at first glance, seem removed from their students' lives. They struggle with how to help students make the significant connections that move their responses beyond viewing other cultures as exotic or strange. Many unwittingly adopt strategies that are tangential, or even in opposition, to the goals of global education, through, for example, focusing on "we-they" dualisms or superficial features of cultural lifestyles that actually reinforce stereotypical perceptions. Simply reading more about the world can actually negatively influence the development of intercultural understanding.

***Interculturalism is an attitude of mind, an orientation that pervades thinking and permeates the curriculum.***

My research focuses on the challenge of effectively engaging children with international literature to build intercultural understanding. One collaborative project involves working with teachers and administrators in a small public elementary school in Tucson, Arizona. Our research examines the pedagogical issues and strategies involved in integrating international literature into the curriculum and the influence of literature on children's understandings of culture and the world. Teachers at Van Horne Elementary

School have written vignettes about their work in an electronic journal, *WOW Stories* ([www.wowlit.org](http://www.wowlit.org)).

### **Teaching for intercultural understanding**

Teaching for intercultural understanding involves far more than lessons on human relations and sensitivity training or adding a book or unit about a country into the existing curriculum. These approaches typically lead to superficial appreciations of cultural differences that reinforce stereotypes, instead of creating new understanding about cultural perspectives and global issues. Interculturalism is an attitude of mind, an orientation that pervades thinking and permeates the curriculum. It is based on a broad understanding of culture as ways of living and being in the world that are designs for acting, believing, and valuing. Geertz (1973) defines culture as "the shared patterns that set the tone, character and quality of people's lives" (p. 216). These patterns include language, religion, gender, relationships, class, ethnicity, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, family structures, nationality, and rural/suburban/urban communities, as well as the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives held by a group of people.

***This framework highlights multiple ways of engaging with international literature to support children's critical explorations of their own cultural identities...***

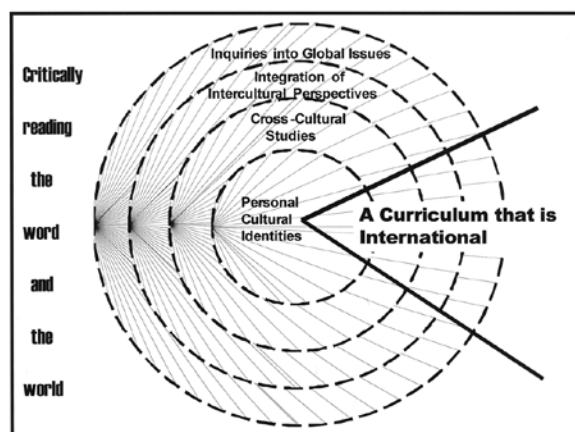
Fleck (1935), a Polish scientist and philosopher, argued that cultures consist of thought collectives that form whenever groups of people learn to think in similar ways because they share a common interest, exchange ideas, maintain interaction over time, and create a history that affects how they think and live. Since most individuals think and act within several thought collectives at a time,

this view captures the dynamic, evolving nature of culture as each person interacts with, and is changed through, transactions with other cultures. These understandings highlight the diverse ways in which culture is reflected in children's lives.

Key scholars in intercultural education (Allan, 2003; Fennes & Hapgood, 1997; Hofstede, 1991) as well as global education (Begler, 1996; Case, 1991) inform my definition of intercultural understanding as an orientation in which learners:

- Explore their cultural identities and develop conceptual understandings of culture.
- Develop an awareness and respect for different cultural perspectives as well as the commonality of human experience.
- Examine issues that have personal, local and global relevance and significance.
- Value the diversity of cultures and perspectives within the world.
- Demonstrate a responsibility and commitment to making a difference to, and in, the world.
- Develop an inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring perspective on taking action to create a better and more just world.

We use a curriculum framework to enact these theoretical beliefs and to organize our curricular work. This framework highlights multiple ways of engaging with international literature to support children's critical explorations of their own cultural identities, ways of living within specific global cultures, the range of cultural perspectives within any unit of study, and complex global issues. The curricular components in the framework interrelate and build from each other to highlight different intercultural understandings. Surrounding these components is an environment in which readers are encouraged to read from a critical stance. We are using this framework to explore the potential that each component offers for children's understandings and the different ways that international literature can be integrated into the life of a school.



### Personal cultural identities

All learners, adults and children, must explore their own cultures before they can understand why culture matters in the lives of others around them. Interculturalism does not begin with the ability to consider other points of view, but with the realization that you have a point of view. Children bring their personal experiences of living in the world and being part of

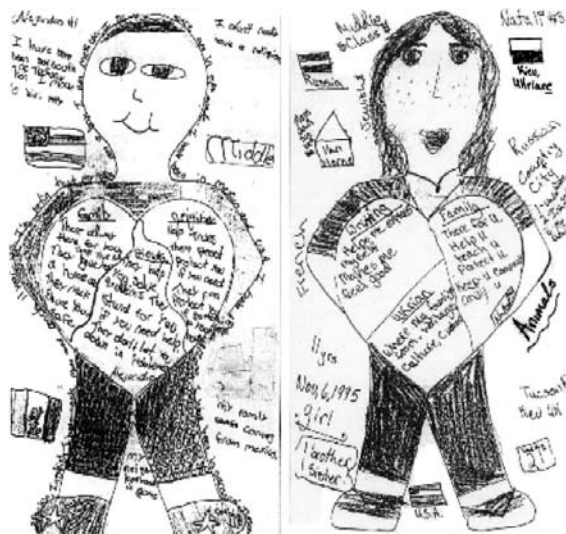
specific cultural groups and social contexts to school. They need to examine their own histories to understand how those experiences and interactions determine their view of the world and they need to find their lives reflected in books in order to value school as relevant. When students recognize the cultures that influence their thinking, they become more aware of how and why culture is important to others. They no longer see culture as about the “other” and as exotic, but recognize that it is at the heart of defining who they are as human beings.

Literature can encourage students to focus on themselves as cultural beings in order to go beyond the typical “Who am I?” activities. In our research, we read aloud and discussed many picture books in which the characters struggled with their identities, such as *You Be Me and I’ll Be You* (Mandelbaum, 1990) and *Cooper’s Lesson* (Shin, 2004). Students responded to these books by exploring their cultural identities in different ways, such as bringing in artifacts reflecting their cultural identities to create museum displays, drawing memory maps of their neighborhoods to identify stories from when they were “little,” and mapping significant events in their lives



on “Life Journey Maps.” They also created “Cultural X-Rays” in which they labeled the outside of their bodies with aspects of their culture that are evident to others, such as language, age, ethnicity, gender, and religion, and the inside with the values and beliefs that they hold in their hearts.

These engagements helped students realize that their experiences within families and communities shape how they think and act. Multicultural books that reflected their own life experiences in the American Southwest were essential to building these understandings. We continued to weave multicultural literature along with international books throughout our inquiries so that they recognized the commonalities in life experiences across diverse cultures as well as the unique aspects of these cultures.



Cultural X-Rays (Alejandro & Natali, age 11).

*Although intercultural understanding is grounded in awareness of one's own cultural perspective, students need to consider points of view beyond their own...*

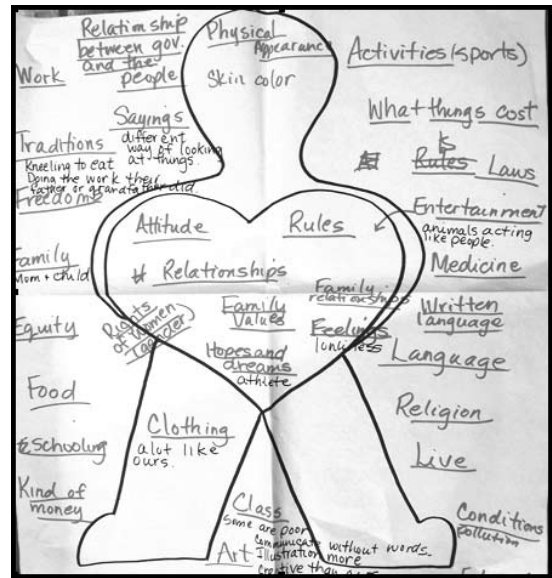
#### Cross-cultural studies

Although intercultural understanding is grounded in awareness of one's own cultural perspective, students need to consider points of view beyond their own, so they come to recognize that their perspective is one of many ways to view the world; not the only one or the norm against which to measure other viewpoints.

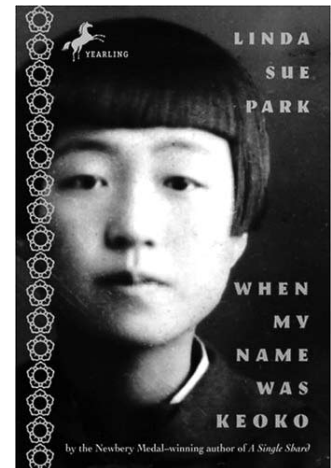
In-depth studies of specific global cultures can broaden students' perspectives and provide a window on the world. Unfortunately cross-cultural studies often take the form of theme units that focus on superficial aspects of a culture through a limited study of the 5fs – food, fashion, folklore, festivals, and famous people. A cross-cultural study should provide an opportunity for children to examine the complexity and diversity within a particular cultural group. Focusing on food or folklore is a beginning, but can lead to stereotypes and superficial understandings unless students also examine the deeper values and beliefs that are significant within that culture. A cross-cultural study should include literature that reflects complexity in terms of the economic, social, political, aesthetic, moral, historical, and geographical contexts of a cultural group (Begler, 1996).

We found that because our students already recognized the complexity of culture within their own lives, we could use their experience of creating Cultural X-Rays to brainstorm what they might explore about another culture. When fifth-grade students began a study of Korean culture, for example, they used a large blank Cultural X-ray to brainstorm the aspects of identity that they needed to explore to understand this culture.

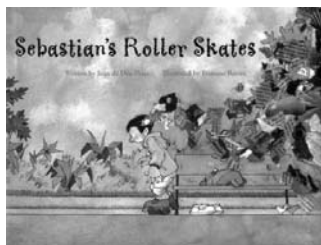
This large chart of brainstormed cultural characteristics served as a place for students to record observations throughout our study as they read from a range of fiction and nonfiction literature. *When My Name Was Keoko* (Park, 2002) was read aloud and discussed and students browsed a collection of many picture books and informational books. We found that the books about Korean culture available in the United States were primarily historical fiction and folklore with few contemporary images, leaving the impression that Korean culture was mired in the past with traditional clothing and small villages. We purchased picture books from South Korea written in Hangul to provide contemporary images and to encourage explorations of the Korean language. We also located books that had been recently translated into English, such as *My Cat Copies Me* (Kwon, 2007), and discussed picture books, such as *Waiting for Mama* (Lee, 2007), that students could connect to their lives but which also provided an anomaly because of actions or values that were unexpected from their cultural viewpoint.



Brainstorm of aspects of identity within a culture (11-year-olds).



*Cross-cultural studies thus provide both a mirror and a window for children as they look out on ways of viewing the world and reflect back on themselves in a new light*



The value of an in-depth cross-cultural study is that students look deeply to understand the complexity within a culture and so go beyond the surface-level explorations that characterize this type of study. Not only can these studies provide a window on a culture, but they can also encourage insights into students' cultural identities. Students come to deeper understandings about their own cultures and perspectives when they encounter alternative possibilities for thinking about the world. Cross-cultural studies thus provide both a mirror and a window for children as they look out on ways of viewing the world and reflect back on themselves in a new light.

### Integration of international perspectives

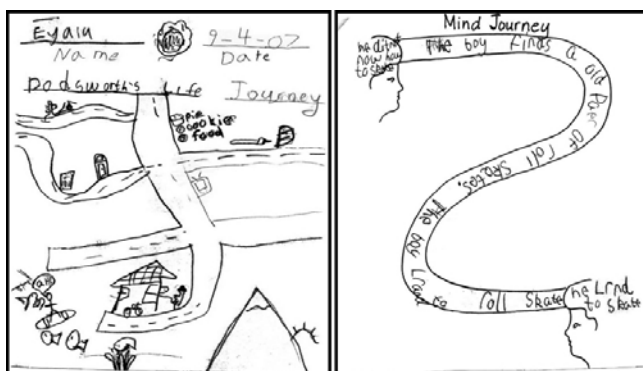
While an occasional cross-cultural study is appropriate, literature reflecting a wide range of cultural perspectives needs to be woven into every classroom study, no matter what the topic or curriculum area. We worked to integrate the stories, languages, lifestyles, and ways of learning from many cultures into units of study across the curriculum, not just for one or two special

units each year. Whether the focus was folklore, family, living at peace with others, the moon, or fractions, we tried to incorporate literature reflecting a range of global perspectives. Otherwise, interculturalism can be viewed as a special unit instead of an orientation that pervades everything.

We took on a school-wide focus on "Journeys," beginning with a conceptual understanding of journeys through connections to children's lives. We discussed literature, such as *Once There Were Giants* (Waddell, 1997) and *The Pink Refrigerator* (Egan, 2007) and asked students to map their own life journeys. Their discussions of different types of journeys led to a range of inquiries. The younger students focused on mapping learning and emotional journeys through responding to books such as *No, I Want Daddy* (Brune-Cosme, 2004) and *Sebastian's Roller Skates* (de Deu Prats, 2005).

The older students met in small groups to discuss text sets organized around themes that emerged from their brainstorming. Each of these text sets included 10-15 picture books from a range of cultural perspectives around the themes of Beginnings and Endings, Movement and Competition, Dreams and Wishes, Growing and Learning, Pain and Healing, Spiritual and Emotional Pathways, and People

*We have been able to locate global literature on various social and historical themes and topics, but have struggled with finding books from a range of global cultures on science and mathematical content.*



Maps of *The Pink Refrigerator* and *Sebastian's Roller Skates*. (Eyalu & Tanner, Age 7).

and Relationships. Their inquiries eventually led students to a study of the forced migration of people who have become refugees throughout the world.

We found that integrating literature from diverse cultures into student inquiries provided for a much wider range of perspectives on a particular theme or topic and so encouraged more complexity in the issues that students considered. They cannot settle comfortably into the issues that are part of their own cultural perspectives only, but are challenged to go beyond that worldview. We have been able to locate global literature on various social and historical themes and topics, but have struggled with finding books from a range of global cultures on science and mathematical content. Those books rarely appear to be selected for translation and publication in North America.

### Inquiries on global issues

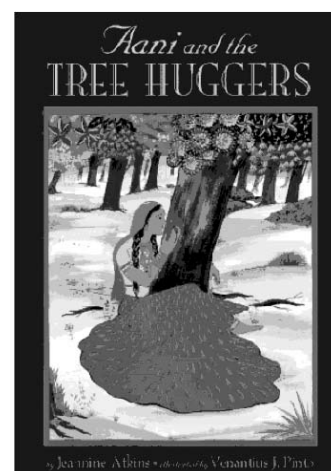
Another curricular component that is significant for building intercultural understanding is developing inquiries that focus on specific global issues, many of which highlight difficult social, political and environmental topics, such as violence, human rights and social justice, environmental degradation, overpopulation, poverty, language loss, race and ethnicity, and economic imperialism (Collins, Czarra, & Smith, 1998). Students occasionally need to study a global issue in-depth and over time to understand the local and global complexity of an issue and to consider ways of taking action in their lives. These studies are essential in encouraging students to go beyond talk and inquiry to determine how to take action to create a better and more just world.

We engaged in a school-wide inquiry on human rights that each classroom took in different directions. We began with developing a conceptual understanding of rights through connections to children's lives. We knew that children often complained about events they saw as "unfair" at

school. We read aloud and discussed books such as *A Fine, Fine School* (Creech, 2003) and *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002) and invited students to create maps of the school on which they located unfair events. These maps supported students in searching for the rights that were involved when they felt something was unfair. Students created lists of what they believed their rights were at school and noted which rights they felt needed to be addressed in their own context.

*Reading critically is the stance that race, class, and gender matter in how we interpret and analyze our experiences in the world as well as in the texts we encounter.*

We moved students beyond a discussion at the local level to the broader global issues through browsing books from many different parts of the world that reflected a range of human rights issues, including *Aani and the Tree Huggers* (Atkins, 1995), *Brothers in Hope* (Williams, 2005), *Selavi* (Landowne, 2005), and *Friends from the Other Side* (Anzaldua, 1993). We also read aloud and discussed books such as *The Carpet Boy's Gift* (Shea, 2006) to examine the strategies that children use to take action in their own contexts. In their classrooms,



## Children's Books Discussed

- Anzaldúa, G. (1993) *Friends from the other side* San Francisco: Children's Book Press
- Atkins, J. (1995) *Aani and the tree huggers* New York: Lee & Low
- Brune-Cosme, N. (2004) *No, I want daddy* New York: Clarion
- Creech, S. (2001) *A fine, fine school* New York: HarperCollins
- D'Adamo, F. (2001) *Iqbal* New York: Aladdin
- de Deu Prats, J. (2005) *Sebastian's roller skates* Ill. F. Rovira La Jolla: Kane/Miller
- Egan, P. (2007) *The pink refrigerator* New York: Houghton Mifflin
- Kwon, Y. D. (2007) *My cat copies me* LaJolla: Kane/Miller
- Landowne, Y. (2005) *Selavi, that is life: A Haitian story of hope* El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos
- Lee, T. J. (2007) *Waiting for mama* Ill. K. Dong-Sung New York: North-South
- Mandelbaum, P. (1990) *You be me, I'll be you* LaJolla: Kane/Miller
- O'Neill, A. (2002) *The recess queen* Ill. L. Huliska-Beith New York: Scholastic
- Park, L.S. (2002) *When my name was Keoko* New York: Yearling
- Perez, L. (2002) *First day in grapes* Ill. R. Casilla New York: Lee & Low
- Shea, P. D. (2003) *The carpet boy's gift* Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House
- Shin, S. Y. (2004) *Cooper's lesson* Ill. K. Cogan San Francisco: Children's Book Press
- Waddell, M. (1997) *Once there were giants* New York: Candlewick
- Williams, M. (2005) *Brothers in hope* Ill. G. Christie New York: Lee & Low

students engaged in a range of inquiries that included discussions, based on their interests, about literature relating to particular human rights issues such as child labor, gender inequity, undocumented immigrants, and homelessness. Throughout these inquiries, students particularly noted the strategies characters used to take action and used these strategies to take action on some of the issues they identified in their own school context.

### Critically reading the word and the world

All components of a curriculum that is international should be permeated with "critically reading the word and the world." Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) used this phrase to indicate the importance of raising issues of power, oppression, and social justice. Without a focus on critically reading the word and the world, the four components could easily become a superficial tour of culture where students learn about internationalism as tourists

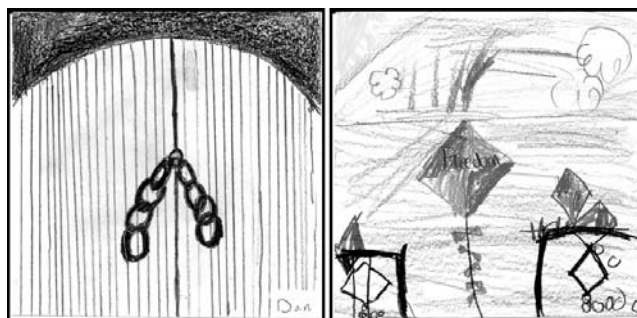
who pick up isolated pieces of information. A tourist curriculum is based on the assumption that "if we all just learned more about each other, we would like each other and the world's problems would be solved." This approach does not consider difficult issues of social justice and so students are unable to make real changes in how they think about and relate to others.

Reading critically is the stance that race, class, and gender matter in how we interpret and analyze our experiences in the world as well as in the texts we encounter. Freire argues that students need to wrestle with ideas and words, not just walk on top of them. Reading the word and the world from a critical stance provides the opportunity to question "what is" and "who benefits" as well as to consider the "what if" of new possibilities. We noticed, for example, that students initially avoided talking about issues of racism by taking a position of colorblindness and stating "It doesn't matter what you look like on the outside, it's the inside that

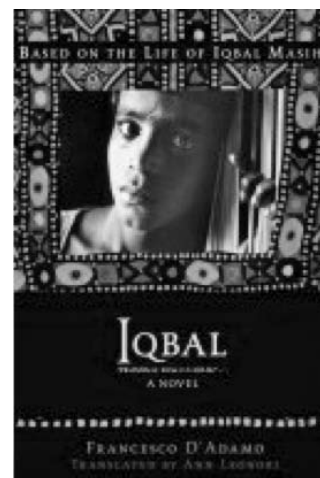
counts.” These statements deny that skin color matters in how people are treated and is one essential aspect of cultural identity. Colorblindness allowed students to walk on top of words, but they needed to be challenged to wrestle with the difficult issues of racism in their lives as well as in the broader world. As always, we began with books close to their lives – such as *First Day in Grapes* (Perez, 2002) about a Latino child who is treated with prejudice – before moving into literature on these issues from a range of cultural perspectives.

Critically reading the word and the world involves students in thinking critically and questioning the way things are and the power relationships they observe in order to consider multiple cultures, perspectives, and ways of taking action. We encouraged students to take this critical stance whether they were looking at their own personal cultural identities, engaging in a cross-cultural study, considering multiple perspectives across the curriculum, or examining a difficult global issue.

In critically examining issues of child labor, for example, a group of nine-year-old children created “Sketch-to-Stretch” responses where they symbolically explored meaning through visual images (Short & Harste, 1996). Dan responded to *Iqbal* (D’Adamo, 2001) about a boy who led an influential movement to protest child labor in Pakistani carpet factories with a sketch of a broken chain to show the boy’s escape from the looms and as a symbol of his freedom, inner strength, and intelligence. The dark colors at the top of the sketch reflected Iqbal’s anger. Gaby responded to the same book with a sketch of the sky and a kite as symbols of freedom breaking through the fence as a symbol of oppression.



Sketch-to-Stretch responses to *Iqbal* (Dan & Gaby, age 9).



### Final reflections

This curriculum framework provides a means of evaluating what is currently happening within a classroom or library context to support the development of intercultural understanding through literature. What is working well can be identified along with what is missing or needs to be strengthened. Although all aspects of this framework will not be in place at one particular moment in time, they should all be available to students across the school year. We found that interactions across the framework can build complex understandings of interculturalism. The components of personal cultural identity and cross-cultural studies focus students on developing conceptual understandings of culture; the integration of international books across the curriculum develops their conceptual understandings of perspective; and

inquiries on global issues highlight conceptual understandings of taking action. All of these understandings are essential for interculturalism as an orientation for approaching life, both inside and outside of school.

Children's engagements with literature have the potential to transform their worldviews through understanding their current lives and imagining beyond themselves. Students do need to find their lives reflected in books, but if what they read in school only mirrors their own views of the world, they cannot envision alternative ways of thinking and being. These experiences need to be embedded within a curriculum that is international, or their potential to challenge students to critically confront issues of culture is diminished or lost. A curriculum and literature that are international offer all of us – educators and students – the potential for enriching and transforming our lives and our views of the world.

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*Illustrator and author Edgar Valter created stories and characters that have become household names in Estonian children's culture. Here we have a glimpse of his life, his work, and his legacy.*

Estonian illustrator and author Edgar Valter (1929-2006; 1996 IBBY Honour List distinction) was not only an illustrator, but also a writer and a spokesperson for children's literature during the second half of the twentieth century. This overview is dedicated to the memory of Edgar Valter, providing a brief analysis of his works. It includes the development of his illustration style, his evolution from illustrator to author-illustrator, and his eventual status as the "Grand Old Man" of Estonian children's culture.

*He gave his first caricature to the editor of Õhtuleht newspaper at the age of 15.*

#### **Valter, the illustrator**

Edgar Valter's development as an artist was long and eventful. His childhood was sunny and safe, as Valter himself has characterized it. As a schoolboy, he was always busy drawing pictures. He was not a good pupil, and all his copybooks were full of drawings. But his childhood drawings were printed in the newspapers of the time, and he gave his first caricature to the editor of *Õhtuleht*, the second biggest daily newspaper in Estonia at the age of 15. Having no academic art education, he used every free minute for drawing, learning techniques

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# Edgar Valter

## Estonia's Master of Art and Imagination in Picture Books

by MARE MÜÜRSEPP



Mare Müürsepp is an associate professor, critic and children's writer who teaches children's literature at Tallinn University, Estonia.



in practice, drawing people in parks, in the street, outdoors. "That was my school. And I wanted to be a good pupil there!" he said.

*Valter was one of the first illustrators in the 1950s to have enough courage to avoid the dogmatic image and to draw joyful, dynamic, humorous figures.*

Valter's first illustrations for a children's book were published in 1948, and he worked as a freelancer illustrator for years afterward. The main tendency in children's literature of 1940-1950s was so-called socialist realism, pointing out the values of hardworking and collectivist heroes. Valter was one of the first illustrators in the 1950s to have enough courage to avoid the dogmatic image and to draw joyful, dynamic, humorous figures.

Valter was entrusted with illustrating the first translation of Astrid Lindgren's works in the Estonian language *Kalle Blomkvisti seiklused* (in English *Bill Bergson, Master Detective*) in 1960. Contemporary Estonian author Leelo Tungal was a schoolgirl then. She remembers, "The brightest experience of the song festival in Tallinn in 1960 was that the book by Astrid Lindgren, *Kalle Blomkvist/Bill Bergson* was bought for me. I read it everywhere, even during the concert (where Leelo was participating as a choir singer). I didn't know anything about this writer, but the illustrations were so exciting."

*Increasing complexity of composition was noticeable in Valter's works in the 1960s.*

Increasing complexity of composition was noticeable in Valter's works in the 1960s. Edgar Valter could skillfully anthropomorphise cars and other machines. He illustrated many fairy tales by Eno Raud about objects that talked. At the same time his tendency towards a deeper psychological approach was developing. The actions of characters were depicted across the entire page, with dynamic mass scenes. As fantasy creatures began to be represented more and more in children's books during the 1960-1970s, they also played an important role in Valter's works. Sometimes the imitation of childlike drawings was combined with the illustrator's uniquely humorous style. And in 1962, Valter illustrated Eno Raud's fantasy about a speaking rag doll Sipsik (Raggie), helping this striped doll become a well-known symbol of child's play and fantasy.

A special feature of Valter's style may be defined as mythological. Illustrations for the books *The Old Mother Kunks*, *Bumpy*, and *Poku Book*



Astrid Lindgren. *Bill Bergson, Master Detective*. 1960

Eno Raud. *Raggie*. 1962

Robert Vaidlo, *The Stories from Kukeleegua Town*. 1965

Eno Raud. *Three Jolly Fellows*. 1972



Ellen Niit. *Safe Place*

follow a pantheistic interpretation of the character. Each of the books presents a certain world of its own; the character lives in a symbiotic relationship with the environment, and every detail – a stump, a spray, etc. – is related to the wholeness. Since the 1970s, such features as a return to natural colours, complicated composition, diversity of meanings, and symbolic imagery have been noted in Valter's illustrations. For example, often Valter used the effect of a deformed horizon; sometimes the world is depicted concave or hollow, like a safe place.

*Valter recognised the significance and seriousness of the child hero's activities for the fictional child.*



Itelmen. *Fairy Tales*

In other instances, the horizon is shown to be convex or like a hill resembling a child's egocentric view. Depending on the writer's ideas, Valter's illustrations have a unique iconotextual relation to the written text. Illustration is like a door into a children's book. An illustration introduces the topic and style of the book to people who are not able to read the language of the book, or who are too young to read.

As a visual narrator, Valter featured active, very dynamic characters in his illustrations. The pictures reflected highly intense activity in the faces of persons, in the richness of details, in the rush of movements. One can see in the pictures that something has happened just now, and the next event will be happening in the next moment. The tonality of his illustrations was usually warm with yellow and brown tones dominating.

*This place of his later years inspired his most well-known books about the Pokus.*

The usual adjective used to describe Edgar Valter's works is "humorous." When taking a closer look at his pictures, however, one can discover that the characters are often rather serious. The kids have thoughtful, even melancholic faces. Valter recognised the significance and seriousness of the child hero's activities for the fictional child. He was also able to see and express the world through the fear, stress and confusion of the child in the book.

#### Valter, the writer and illustrator

Edgar Valter was an accomplished illustrator, a visual narrator. During the last 12 years of his life, he was also a writer. Valter's pictures form a concrete space for the events of his works. The city environment, the old town with a number of historical details, and the world of nature have all been close to the artist and are captured in his art.



Edgar Valter. Poku Book, 1994

*One of the books Valter created in his last period of work was a nonfiction book, **How to Learn to Look.***

Indeed, in the last period of his life he escaped from the city and lived as a hermit in his house at a quiet place in South Estonia. He did not like to come out even to receive awards for his works. This place of his later years inspired his most well-known books about the Pokus.

In fact, the last construct that Valter represented in many of his books during the 1990s was the idea of Pokus, characters found in the Estonian environment. They resemble lofty tussocks of withered grass one can find in the forest or in the marsh. After many years of illustrating the works of others, Valter authored his first book in 1994 and it was the Poku book. Success was quick to follow. In 1995, Valter won the grand prize both in the category of writing and of illustrating at the Bumpy Contest where children vote for the best author of the last two years. Edgar Valter wrote and illustrated three books about the Pokus, and created board games, a calendar, postcards and other products that were also published. These characters are child-like; they are presented as young, playful and happy. They symbolise harmony between the human mind and nature, the symbiosis between different beings in nature, the opportunity for peaceful and numinous life.

Valter commands different styles when writing a story in contrast with illustrating a text. The stories about the Pokus flow slowly, with a richness of language that reflects a general view of the older generation speaking to the younger generation. The main hero is an old man Puuko, the writer's alter ego, living in the forest, and his only friends are a dog and a cat. Once upon a time, the Pokus – the creatures of forest – began to travel to look for a new area to live. They meet Puuko. They acquire the following roles: Puuko is a representative of human society and the Pokus are the children, not yet "real" people, developing, discovering themselves and the world. The Pokus ask, and Puuko tells; Puuko clarifies things and the Pokus try to understand, asking curious questions again and again. The topic of the Pokus books is simply everyday life in the forest, a running conversation between the Pokus and Puuko. Storytelling is the main activity in the book. There is no dynamic activity there – no escapes or fights. Puuko and his small friends talk about different phenomena of nature and their place in the world.

There are other books written in a very laconic style by Valter. The short story *The Cat and The Owl* is like a fable. The cat and the owl notice that there is a certain similarity between their body parts: ears, eyes, legs. They exchange them step by step with each other. The problem of identity, so popular in children's books is treated there.

In contrast, a brilliant example of Valter's aphoristic style is *Kuldne vilepill*



Edgar Valter. *The Golden Pipe*.  
1996

(The Golden Pipe). The story is about a boy and a girl, Teemu and Teesi. Shepherd Teemu gives a pipe to Teesi and teaches her to play it. While practising the blowing of the pipe, their lips meet, and the feeling is pleasant. The children decide to get married in the future. Their dream comes true and they have a big family. Sometimes they remember how to play the pipe.

*The parents are excited to see  
their favourite caricaturist's  
illustrations in the books read by  
their children, and the children  
are proud that their favourite  
artist is also known and loved by  
their parents.*

Altogether, Edgar Valter authored 12 books. Often the main character of his book is an older person, resembling Valter himself, e.g. an artist living in the tower of the old town and communicating with a ghost. There are witches and other mythological figures acting in his books. However, one of the books Valter created in his last period of work was a nonfiction book *How to Learn to Look*. There, Valter reveals a little about the secret of his gift as an artist. He demonstrates to the reader different examples of flowers, trees, stones, and other elements of nature, showing that one can always see fantasy figures in the real world.

Edgar Valter. *How to  
Learn to Look*. 2000



The richness of what one can see depends on the imagination.

### Valter, the "Grand Old Man"

Edgar Valter has never been known only as a children's book illustrator. Since the 1940s, his caricatures were published in newspapers and journals and he created books of comics for adults. Thus his dynamic drawing and striking works have been appreciated by many generations. The parents are excited to see their favourite caricaturist's illustrations in the books read by their children, and the children are proud that their favourite artist is also known and loved by their parents. The name of illustrator Valter has become better known than the names of many of the writers of the books he has illustrated. Many textbooks were entrusted to him to illustrate and many children encountered his work in school and in the library.

The names and figures of characters of several of the most beloved children's books like *Sipsik*



self-portrait of  
Edgar Valter

(Raggie), *Naksitrallid* (Three Jolly Fellows: Muff, Halfshoe and Mossbeard), *Krõll* (Cricel) have become brand names and household names widely used in children's culture. There are many kindergartens and shops of children's clothes and toys named Sipsik or Krõll. These jolly fellows have even had their likeness printed on juice packaging!

After 1994, when the first book about the Pokus was published, these figures began to play a remarkable role in children's culture overall. Different children's activities were organised around the themes of the Pokus, such as the contest of the best song of the Pokus, where the children were asked to compose and perform the song. There were instructions for making Poku costumes and for participating in parties and processions. The most important Poku procession has been traditionally organised in Tallinn on the first of June to celebrate the Children's Day.

*Illustrator and writer Edgar Valter  
was the co-creator of some of the  
best-known characters in Estonian  
children's literature.*

Estonian fans of children's books have even decided to establish the Pokuland Park in South Estonia, similar to other children's theme parks, such as Disneyland and Moominland, in the area where Valter lived at the end of his life. The Pokuland Foundation has chosen an area with an eye to creating a symbiosis of fairy-tale elements and the natural environment. The objectives of Pokuland are to teach children how to become friends with nature, to broaden the knowledge of culture and nature, to develop children's fantasy lives, to introduce the rural life style, and to display Valter's creative work.

Illustrator and writer Edgar Valter was the co-creator of some of the best-known characters in

Estonian children's literature. He died in 2006 at the height of his popularity, highly regarded both by children and adult critics. Even his funeral brought people together. Indeed, when Valter died after a severe illness in the winter of 2006, the weather was very cold, and he expressed before his death the wish to be buried in May, when there would be a Day of Flower Chaplet in his Poku Calendar. The people coming to the funeral (it was combined with a memorial conference and a concert in the big hall of the National Library) were asked to dress not in black, but in colours, reflecting the flourishing spring. This was a tribute to Valter's lifelong desire to show the beauty of the world to children. Valter's legacy of illustration and innovation has had a lasting influence on the development of picture books in Estonian children's literature and beyond. He has clearly earned the title of the "Grand Old Man" of Estonian children's culture.

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- Official site of Poku World: [www.pokumaa.ee](http://www.pokumaa.ee), 15.12.2008.

### Edgar Valter: Selected Awards and Prizes

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1971 Diploma of the exhibition of book illustrations in Leipzig for the illustrations for "Ats' Plaits" by Uno Leies</p> <p>1986 Title of honour of a merited cultural personage of Soviet Estonia</p> <p>1992 First competition of Nukits: third prize for the illustrations for "The Big Scolding" by Ralf Parve</p> <p>1995 Annual prize of the Fund for Furthering Culture in the field of literature for children for "The Pokubook"</p> <p>1996 Honorary list of IBBY for his life's work; Third competition of Nukits: Grand prix for "The Pokubook"; Grand prix of artist for the illustrations for "The Pokubook"; Second prize of artist for the illustrations for "The Pussy-cat and the Owl"</p> <p>1996 Contest of illustration of books for children published in 1995: First prize for illustrations for "The Story of a Kind Dragon Justus and Princess Miniminni" and E.Niit's "Kröll's Pancake-making"</p> <p>1996 State cultural prize in the field of art (annual prize) for illustrations for "The Pokubook" and other books for children</p> <p>2000 Fifth contest of Nukits: Grand prix for the illustrations for "The Brushtails"; Second prize as</p> | <p>writer for "The Brushtails"; Second prize as artist for "The Sunday of a Forest"</p> <p>2001 Third-rank order of White Star</p> <p>2001 Estonian National Culture Foundation prize for his life's work</p> <p>2002 Eerik Kumari nature protection prize for "The Pokubook"</p> <p>2002 Sixth contest of Nukits: Second prize of artists for the illustrations for "How to learn to look"</p> <p>2002 Contest "25 most beautiful books": Special diploma of 5 most beautiful books for children for "The Poku ABC-book"</p> <p>2003 Contest "25 most beautiful books": Leelo Tungal's "The Stories about Anna and Aadam" illustrated by Edgar Valter was declared one of 5 most beautiful books for children</p> <p>2004 Seventh contest of Nukits: Third prize of artists for "A Bit Funny Pictures"; the winner of adults' voting with "The Poku ABC-book" (text and illustrations)</p> <p>2005 Honorary member of the Union of Estonian Artists</p> <p>2006 Eighth Nukits contest: Second prize of an artist for "The Pokubook"; Second prize of a writer for "The Pokustories"; the winner of adults' voting with "The Pokustories" (text and illustrations)</p> |
|---|--|

*Published sixty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed on 10 December 1948, this stunning book offers a simplified text for young readers. Each article of the declaration is sumptuously illustrated by an internationally known British children's book illustrator. Images range from the comic to the serious with broad variety in both media and artistic style. Among the illustrators are: Catherine and Laurence Anholt, John Burningham, Niki Daly, Debi Gliori and Jessica Souhami. In the foreword David Tennant states, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is clear and uncomplicated. It reads like a list of common sense – maybe everyone should have a copy pinned up in their bedroom." As with all truths, profound in their simplicity, the greatest challenge is living one's life by these fundamentals. John Boyne, author of The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, comments, "Believing in them, acting on them, promising never to break them, that's how we make the world a better place. It's how we make ourselves better people." Consider pairing We Are All Born Free with For Every Child: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Word and Pictures, published by Red Fox in conjunction with UNICEF in 2000.*

Jeffrey Brewster



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL –  
UK SECTION  
Foreword by David Tennant and John Boyne illustrated by multiple artists  
***We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures***

London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2008.

Unpaged ISBN-13: 9781845076504

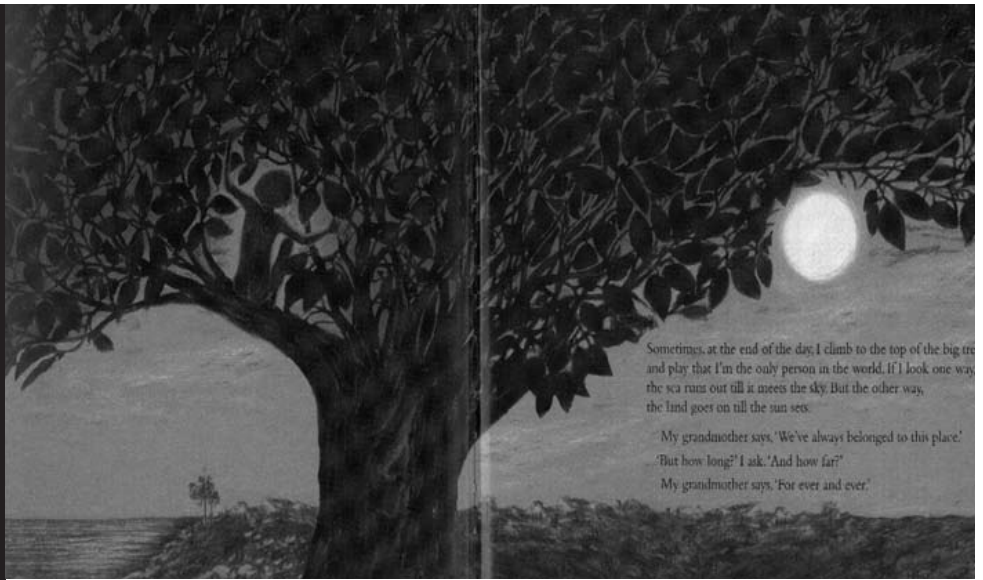
(picture book for all ages)

# Mapping Australia's Past In Picture Books

by ROBIN MORROW



Robin Morrow, a Children's Literature Consultant from Beecroft, New South Wales, is president of IBBY Australia.



Sometimes, at the end of the day, I climb to the top of the big tree and play that I'm the only person in the world. If I look one way, the sea runs out till it meets the sky. But the other way, the land goes on till the sun sets.

My grandmother says, 'We've always belonged to this place.'

'But how long?' I ask. 'And how far?'

My grandmother says, 'For ever and ever.'

*This paper examines four influential Australian picture books that provide narratives from different perspectives, representing the white men's (and especially military) history, white women's (settler) history, Aboriginal history (from traditional life to colonial and then post-colonial), and finally everybody's history, especially giving voice to children.*

Australia has recently emerged from a long period of conservative government (1996–2007), and John Howard, the Prime Minister during those years, expressed strong views about Australian history and the way it is presented. A feature of life under the Howard government became the *history wars*; Howard extolled the virtues of *narrative history*, even dwelling on this in his pre-election debate against his opponent Kevin Rudd. One of Howard's concluding remarks (1996) was 'We need to restore a proper narrative of Australian history. We can't know where to go, we can't understand where we are now without properly understanding where we've come from.'

*It is, of course, important to decide which narratives we tell children, and how they are told. It is vital that children are told a range of narratives about the past, with the characters and, importantly, the narrators, representing not just one gender or one race or one class.*

While there are many matters about which I would take issue with Mr. Howard, I cannot disagree with his contention that history is important; nor that narrative history is vital, especially for children. It is, of course, important to decide which narratives we tell children, and how they are told. It is vital that children are told a range of narratives about the past, with the characters and, importantly, the narrators, representing not just one gender or one race or one class. Watkins (1992) states that children's books provide *maps of meaning* and these maps need to be varied in order to allow many different children to find a path they can recognise.

### *Australian picture books show a strong interest in versions of continuity within change*

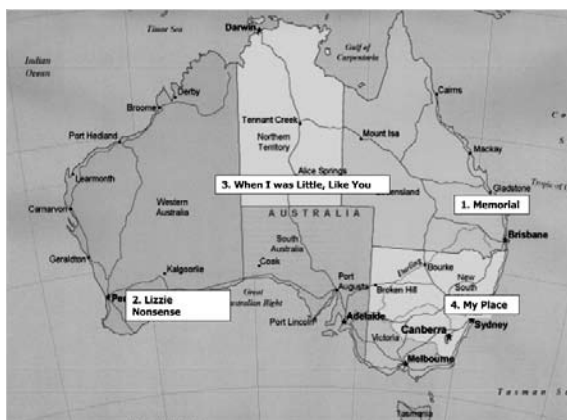
This paper examines four influential picture books that provide narratives from different perspectives. First of all they vary in their settings across the vast island continent, being set respectively in small town Queensland, in rural Western Australia, in the desert country of central Australia, and in Sydney, the most populous city in Australia and the first site of white settlement. Secondly, the books represent respectively white men's (and especially military) history; white women's (settler) history; Aboriginal history (from

traditional life to colonial and then post-colonial times); and finally *everybody's* history, especially giving voice to children.

#### White men's history

'Australian picture books show a strong interest in versions of continuity within change' according to Stephens (1994). The first picture book example, *Memorial* (1999) is the story of one tree in a small town through changing times. The history that is told is mainly that of the wars for which Australian men have travelled overseas to fight. There is a recurring pattern in Australian history of men going to fight wars in other countries, and the survivors, who are called 'returned men,' have strong voices, both individually and collectively in shaping Australian *maps of meaning*. Crew's text for this picture book is based on the township of Eumindi in Queensland, but numerous towns have similar memorials.

*There is a recurring pattern in Australian history of men going to fight wars in other countries, and the survivors, who are called 'returned men,' have strong voices, both individually and collectively in shaping Australian maps of meaning.*



Shaun Tan's illustrations in this book, many using collage, evoke memories by suggesting the pages of a photo album, the sepia images of yesteryear, or torn canvas swatches from military uniforms or tents or flags. The narrator's great-grandfather says 'we got chopped to bits at Ypres.'

The book begins in present time: 'my great-grandpa says . . .' The tree is a Moreton Bay fig tree which was planted in 1918 at the end of World War I, and now the council wants to chop it down

because it is messy. It drops its fruit, and its roots threaten the stability of the other memorial, a rock and concrete statue of the Unknown Soldier. There are flashbacks to earlier times in the life of the tree, moving in neat linear progression from World War I to World War II and back to the present. In 1946, there is another memorial service when the narrator's grandfather returns from his overseas service. After this event, the young people who were to become the narrator's parents had a tree house up in the fig tree. The father went on to serve in Vietnam, and there was a memorial service for the Vietnam-returners in 1972.

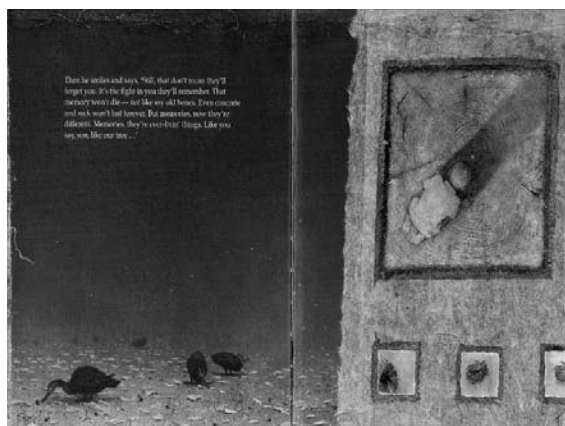
The tree becomes symbolic of war and deeply disturbing memories. But it is also presented as contrasting with the 'rock and concrete'; it is a living thing and will, it seems, nurture life and growth even after it is chopped down. The pessimism of the great-grandfather: 'The big boys will beat you every time. They'll chop you to bits . . .' is tempered with a tough optimism: 'still, that don't mean they'll forget you. It's the fight in you they'll remember . . . Memories, they're ever-livin' things . . .'

*The tree becomes symbolic of war and deeply disturbing memories. But it is also presented as contrasting with the 'rock and concrete'; it is a living thing and will, it seems, nurture life and growth even after it is chopped down.*

*Memorial* presents some contradictory messages itself. These include the pride and patriotism of RSL history (Returned & Services League of Australia); vestigial class warfare (antipathy towards the 'big boys'); and an optimistic message about the endurance of life itself and the power of memory. The book also celebrates the life of a small community. The tree offers a place for

children's play, for courtship, and for shelter from the great heat of Queensland summers. It also nurtures other forms of life ('birds and fruit bats and possums' in the text and other species, such as the beetle, in the illustrations).

Within this book women play minor roles, being courted by the men, bearing children and pouring tea. And although the narrator is a young (unnamed) boy, his place in this *map of meaning* seems mainly as a receiver of the tales of the past and as their custodian for the future. The only visual representation of the boy is at the end, where he is shown (from above) poring over the cut section of the tree trunk, examining its age rings. The powerful words and images in *Memorial* treat some important themes of history, but almost exclusively from the viewpoint of men.



#### White women's (settler) history

*Lizzie Nonsense* (2004) was published last of the four touchstone books, but is set back in the early twentieth century. It tells a story of white settler women, in this instance in the timber-getting country of Western Australia. The wife is managing alone in the wilds with her children, while the husband is away delivering sandalwood; all based on the real-life experiences of author Jan Ormerod's grandmother. This grandmother was 'a small, tough person' in the words of her granddaughter, 'not an educated woman,' but she

found the words to tell of her pioneering life when she wrote her memoirs for the King's Park Memorial in Perth. It was her daughter, the fictionalised Lizzie, who was to become Jan's mother, and who was 'a storyteller.'

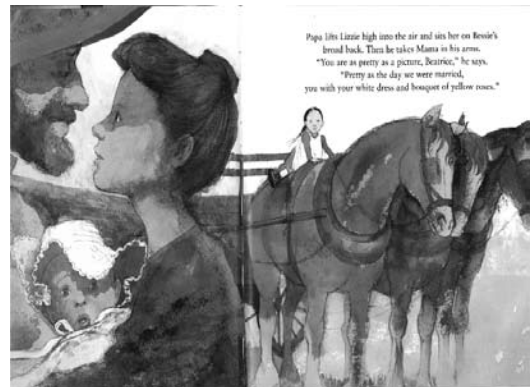
*Lizzie Nonsense* is a tale of isolation, of being cut off from 'civilisation,' and about the power of imagination to transform a child's life. When the husband/father takes his load of sandalwood to town, 'fifty miles along sand tracks,' he is away a long time and the wife and child are alone in their cottage. Although this is a story of femininity, it is also a story of courage and perseverance, reminiscent of the famous tale "The Drover's Wife" by Henry Lawson.

When describing the techniques and materials used in *Lizzie Nonsense*, Jan Ormerod says that to achieve 'a translucent effect for filtered light,' she used white

paper and watercolour (and a bit of gouache) and she employed household sponges of various sizes for the textures. The world of Lizzie is a romanticised and feminine white settler history, rendered in a gentle, nostalgic light. But outside this romanticised world are things to be feared, and this fear is a powerful force, both spoken and unspoken, in the book. There is the frightening sound of the howling dingoes. 'Lizzie and her mama wish the dingoes howling outside at night were just imagination.' What is not expressed is fear of Aboriginal inhabitants of the country.

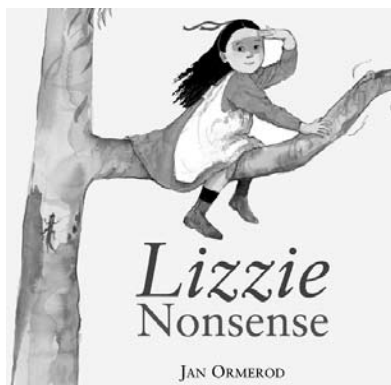
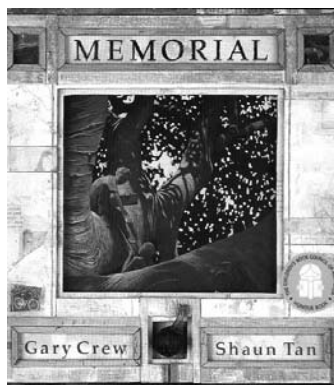
To complete the romance, *Lizzie Nonsense* culminates in the happy scene of father's homecoming. The wife and child have managed both practically and imaginatively in his absence, but are ultimately dependent on him in this frontier world.

*Lizzie Nonsense is a tale of isolation, of being cut off from 'civilisation', and about the power of imagination to transform a child's life.*



### Black history

It was not until 2003 that *When I Was Little, Like You*, the first major Aboriginal autobiography in picture book form, was published. [Important predecessors include many retellings of Aboriginal Dreamtime stories in picture book form, especially those of Dick Roughsey; then the picture book *Tjurnan Roughtail*; and in 2000 Elaine Russell's *A is for Auntie*, an alphabet book incorporating elements of her autobiography.] This groundbreaking autobiographical picture book, *When I Was Little, Like You*, is remarkable in its subject matter, in that Mary Malbunka's life encapsulated a complete narrative of Australian history, from the traditional Aboriginal way of life, through the colonial era, to the post-colonial period. It is both personal

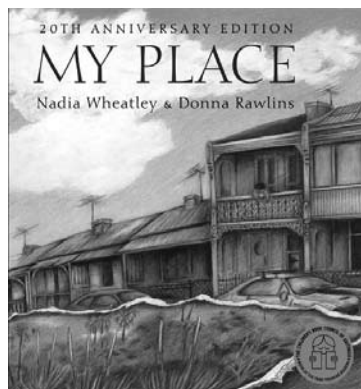
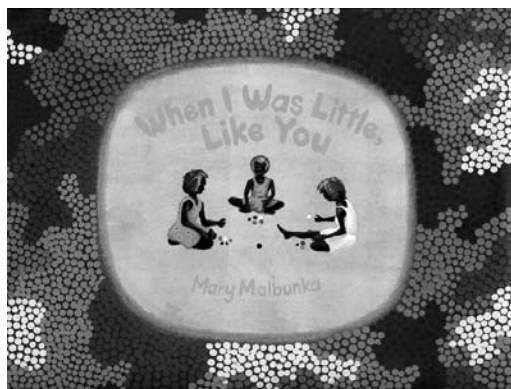


*Gary Crew and Shaun Tan. Memorial. 1999*

*Jan Ormerod. Lizzie Nonsense. Little Hare. 2004*

*Mary Malbunka. When I Was Little, Like You. Allen & Unwin. 2003*

*Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins. My Place. 1987/2008*



and communal, emphasising the importance of handing on traditions to the next generation.

The book is remarkable also for moving, technically, into new areas of *integration*. Nadia Wheatley and Ken Searle were facilitators for this book, having worked with the Papunya School Community on *The Papunya School Book of Country and History*, to which Mary Malbunka had been a major contributor. With their encouragement, Mary brought her talents to this autobiographical work. *When I Was Little* demonstrates integration of pictures and words; of 'whitefella' words and Luritja language; of western (European) art and Western Desert art (providing a demonstration lesson in Papunya school's 'two-way' means of education); and integration of Australia's past, present and future.

The simple narrative voice tells the story of a life filled with complicated challenges such as managing a multilingual education. 'School was hard to understand because we were talking Luritja outside, but in the classroom we were talking only English'. (And each school day the Bible would be read aloud to them, both in English and in Arrernte, which was not Mary's father's language of Luritja, nor her mother's language of Warlpiri).

Visually, the design of the book makes skilful use of wide landscape-shaped spreads to evoke the land and skylines of the desert country and to

present varying combinations of viewpoint. There is, for example, a spread with three illustrations in western perspective, then the swimming pool shown in 'birds-eye' view. It shows how Mary Malbunka's style is well-suited to narrative, using a kind of comic-book technique to show events in succession. Another spread has illustrations in western perspective except for the depiction of the Tjupi Dreaming (honey ants) in the traditional 'dot' style. Into a mundane tale of a food gathering comes the luminous spiritual element—the fact that the honey ants are both food for the body and food for the spirit is emphasised by their depiction in this way.

The final illustration, a sumptuous and richly coloured self-portrait of the narrator, may seem at first glance to be totally in traditional dot style. A closer look reveals that things are not so simple. The central figure, Mary herself as an adult and to some degree 'westernised,' is rendered in Western perspective.



There are distressing things in this autobiography. It begins with a forced move from the small mission settlement into the large government settlement of Papunya for 'assimilation.' Truancy regulations at school were harsh. One expedition the author tells about, to dig for honey ants, ends in fearful hiding from the 'station man' who might shoot them. And outside the book, the story of Mary Malbunka's

life had the all-too-common ending for Aboriginal Australians of an untimely death in 2004 from complications of kidney disease, the legacy of the white-flour-and-sugar diet to which Anangu were introduced by white people.

*On the last spread she writes:  
'... We still go out bush with our  
families ... we tell them the stories  
we learned when we were little'.*

But Mary Malbunka found satisfaction in handing on her life story and many of the important things she had learned. On the last spread she writes: '... We still go out bush with our families ... we tell them the stories we learned when we were little.' This book contains maps of country, instructions about practicalities, and in the wider sense, it is a map of principles of education and life. And her book ended with the words that are used to end a telephone call, or a discussion, or a story, or a life: 'Kala Palya.' Which means something like: 'It is finished. It is good.'

### Everybody's history, especially children's

Just over twenty years ago, *My Place* burst onto the scene as a revolutionary book: ambitious, political, hard to categorise. In 1988, it won the award for Book of the Year: Younger Readers and also the inaugural Eve Pownall Award for Information Books.

The context of its publication was that white Australia was planning to celebrate the Bicentenary—200 years since Captain Arthur Phillip had arrived with the First Fleet in Sydney Harbour and founded New South Wales, the start of colonial Australia. Celebrations would include the presentation of medallions to schoolchildren; the opening of the new Parliament House in Canberra by Queen Elizabeth II; a First Fleet re-enactment in Sydney Harbour complete with tall

ships; and the World Expo to be held in Brisbane. A few media stories told of planned protests by Aboriginal and other Australians, of protests that the Bicentenary of white settlement was a cause for mourning, not celebration, and that Australia Day should be renamed "Invasion Day." In the 1980s, the Mabo land rights case was being fought in the courts and in public opinion.<sup>1</sup> The writer, Nadia Wheatley (2005), states about the origins of *My Place*: 'The aim was to try to counteract Bicentennial glorification of white Australian history.'

The book tells the history of one piece of land in Sydney from 1788 to 1988, using the narrative voices of the various children who have lived there. One of the original qualities of the book is its present-to-past structure. Using the educational principle of 'starting where the child is at,' the book begins with the 1988 spread ('now' at time of publication) and each successive spread moves backwards in time by a decade.

After a succession of narrators representing settlers from different parts of the world, the narrator of the final spread is an Aboriginal girl of the original people who would occupy this area at certain seasons of the year. The book literally provides *maps of meaning* in that each spread includes a map of that child's microcosm.

*The writer, Nadia Wheatley, states about the origins of My Place: 'The aim was to try to counteract Bicentennial glorification of white Australian history.'*

Like any significant work of art, *My Place* was both shaped by the times from which it emerged, and in turn became a shaper of the culture. Wheatley and Rawlins intended to provide a response to the white triumphalism of the time, by beginning and ending with Aboriginal characters claiming

their place. But acknowledging the other migrant peoples and giving voice to their stories was also rare at the time of the book's publication. Non-Anglo characters were rare in Australian picture books at that time. I was a children's bookseller in the 1980s and heard grateful comments from parents and teachers of varied ethnic origins who were thrilled with the representation of diversity in *My Place*. *My Place* was hailed as a multicultural book.

*I was a children's bookseller in the 1980s and heard grateful comments from parents and teachers of varied ethnic origins who were thrilled with the representation of diversity in My Place.*

This book uses 'continuity within change' to teach powerful lessons. They include the lesson that the history of Australia is not just the story of a white, British-based colony (elsewhere, Wheatley has expressed this view explicitly and strongly, 2004); that new arrivals adapt and eventually feel at home in the new land; that children personalise their environment; that there is power in community; and that there is importance in maps. *My Place* always presents a child's-eye view of the home territory, with the tree and the river/creek/canal being places for play or refuge, consistent with the idea of childhood being 'bounded by others and by the spaces of home and locality' (Pile and Thrift 1995 p 48; see sidebar: About Map Making). This final spread makes clear that the progression in time has had a circularity to it, from Aboriginal to Aboriginal occupants of 'my place'.

For the 20th anniversary reissue of *My Place* in 2008, the author and illustrator added a timeline as a new frontispiece, a map in time rather than space. The last item on the timeline is 'Australia says Sorry to Aboriginal people.' This refers to

the apology by the present Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, to Australia's Indigenous Peoples on 13 February 2008.

*There comes a time in the history of nations when their peoples must become fully reconciled to their past if they are to go forward with confidence to embrace their future.*

There is some kind of coming full circle from Prime Minister to Prime Minister, in this brief examination of some of the histories told to our children. In his apology Prime Minister Rudd included these words (2008)

*There comes a time in the history of nations when their peoples must become fully reconciled to their past if they are to go forward with confidence to embrace their future. Our nation, Australia, has reached such a time. And that is why the parliament is today here assembled: to deal with this unfinished business of the nation, to remove a great stain from the nation's soul and, in a true spirit of reconciliation, to open a new chapter in the history of this great land, Australia.*

Each of these four picture books provides powerful images and messages; taken together they can contribute to a composite, richly layered map of Australia's history.

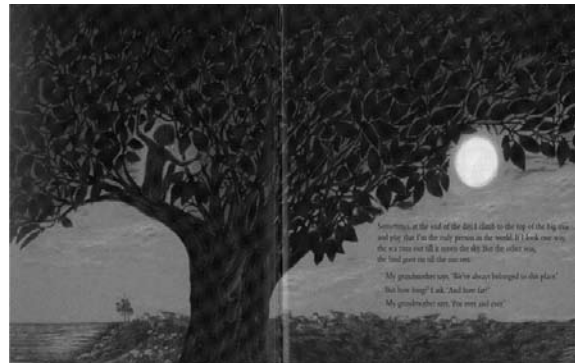
#### Four Touchstone Australian Picture Books

Crew, Gary and Shaun Tan (1999) *Memorial Lothian*

Malbunka, Mary (2003) *When I Was Little, Like You* Allen & Unwin

Ormerod, Jan (2004) *Lizzie Nonsense* Little Hare

Wheatley, Nadia and Donna Rawlins (1987) *My Place* Collins Dove; reissue Walker Books Australia 2008



#### SIDEBAR

##### About Map Making

Maps are now seen as ideologically charged. As the scientific world-view came to predominate in the nineteenth century, maps were seen as part of the triumph of the scientific over the subjective, and much emphasis was placed on their accuracy. But recent theorising about maps claims that they are in fact social constructions: the idea of maps as two dimensional and fixed is considered masculinist and colonial; three-dimensional maps are favoured, and the need for continual remapping is emphasised (Pile and Thrift 1995). It is claimed that people map themselves into socially sanctioned regulations of body and self (Pile and Thrift 1995), and the childhood self in particular is bounded by others and by the spaces of home and locality. These boundaries of time and space help construct childhood; at first the family protects the child, but gradually the world 'seeps in' (Sibley 1995 (b) p 126).

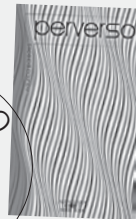
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<sup>1</sup> The Mabo case had been launched in 1982. Eddie Mabo, a Murray Island man from the Torres Strait, was joined by others in a claim to land. Mabo v Commonwealth was decided by the High Court in 1992 (a few months after the death of Eddie Mabo himself). This decision became known as Mabo and the decision of the High Court finally led to an overturning of the doctrine of terra nullius with recognition given to a prior and ongoing right of Aboriginal people. These rights became known as native title rights under the National Native Title Act passed by the Commonwealth Parliament in 1994.

One day, Anibal and Ursula decide to explore an abandoned mansion. Their curiosity takes them to a hideous place where Doctor Gregorio Birlar experiments his awful methods on people who are kept as prisoners. There, they suffer severe tortures and torments. The young couple has to face fear and evil as the result of a terrible experience. The book can be read as a story of horror, but its significance goes beyond. In fact, it deals with inner perspectives, but most of all, with eternal questions such as the struggle between good and evil, as well as the redeeming power of love. Mauricio Paredes, born in 1972, is well known for his texts, most of them presenting plenty of humorous situations. As a bestselling author of children's literature, he is constantly invited to schools, libraries and book fairs. This time, he surprises his many readers in many ways with the publication of a quite different type of story, intended for teen readers.

Carolina Valdivieso



Mauricio Paredes  
illus Veronica Laymuns  
*Perverso (Perverse)*

Santiago, Chile: Alfaguara, 2008  
122 pp. ISBN 9789562396004  
(fiction, 14+)

*This article considers what information has been available to Chinese youth regarding the Sino-Japanese War and the hotly contested topic of Japanese war crimes. How have these subjects been represented in Chinese youth literature, particularly in the format of *lian huan hua*, published in post-1949 mainland China ruled by the Communist Party? Minjie Chen analyzes the way violence and trauma is depicted in these texts and images for young readers.*

The Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)<sup>1</sup>, which merged into the Pacific War and World War II following the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941, has inspired numerous works in Chinese popular culture, some of which were produced for youth and many others for a general audience but accessible to young adults. In addition to literature, art, music, opera, radio, television, and film, the Sino-Japanese War has been captured in postal stamps, etched onto granite monuments in parks, and, since the 1990s, reenacted in virtual battles in computer games. Family narratives, museum visits, and the Internet offer further sources for Chinese youth to learn what happened during World War II in their country.

*This article focuses on analyzing what information has been available to Chinese youth to pass on the memory of Pacific War history.*

This article focuses on analyzing what information has been available to Chinese youth to pass on the memory of Pacific War history. It examines how the Sino-Japanese War and the hotly contested topic of Japanese war crimes have been represented in Chinese youth literature, particularly in the format of *lian huan hua* (abbreviated as LHH below), published in post-1949 mainland China ruled by the Communist Party. It reviews the principal subject matter of stories about the Sino-Japanese War and analyzes the way violence and trauma is depicted in texts and images for young readers. This study includes both fiction and nonfiction titles and considers them equally important sources of information for youth. If nonfiction is the most direct source

# From Victory to Victimization

The Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) as Depicted in  
Chinese Youth Literature

by MINJIE CHEN



Minjie Chen is a PhD Candidate in Library and Information Studies at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

providing factual information about any topic, fiction and imaginative works can speak about emotional truths hidden beneath the numbers and maps. Armed with artistically captivating power, fiction can sell its carefully or poorly researched information no less aggressively than nonfiction does.

*Arguably the most widely available and most popular type of literature read by generations of Chinese young people until the mid-1980s, lian huan hua plays an important role in the reading history of Chinese youth.*

Arguably the most widely available and most popular type of literature read by generations of Chinese young people until the mid-1980s, LHH plays an important role in the reading history of Chinese youth. Literally meaning ‘serial pictures’ in Chinese, “*lian huan hua*” (LHH) seems to be a loose term for nearly all books with images on every page, including illustrated story books, picture books, comic literature, and movie spin-offs created from movie stills with accompanying captions (see detailed introductions to this format in Hwang 1978, Farquhar 1999, Mo and Shen 2006). A large number of LHH titles are adaptations from fiction, nonfiction, opera, and movies, but there are completely original creations as well. In its heyday LHH typically appeared palm-sized (about 4 by 5 inches), and the age range of its readers varied widely, depending on the length, language level, art style, and subject matter of the stories, from barely literate young children to young adults to many adults.

My analysis is divided into two chronological sections. The first part focuses on works published from the 1950s to the 1980s, during which period Chinese LHH enjoyed a huge market and many

classical titles on the Sino-Japanese War were produced. Competing with foreign imports of comic literature as well as the newly introduced television<sup>2</sup>, Chinese LHH began to decline after 1985, and the industry shrank from a yearly output of 3,000 titles or so in 1985 to only 350 titles in 1991 (Lin 1997, Shi and Hu 2008). The second portion of the paper focuses on works published from the 1990s to the present, when Chinese LHH no longer dominated the leisure reading of Chinese youth and only a small number of new titles were published on the Sino-Japanese War. In addition, it should be noted that all English translations from Chinese youth literature and secondary sources quoted are mine and that Chinese is my native language and English my second.

*Little Soldier Chang Ka-tse is perhaps the best-known Chinese children’s story about the Sino-Japanese War.*

**From the 1950s to the 1980s:**

**About victory over the villains**

The Sino-Japanese War is a popular topic in Chinese LHH. My search found well over 600 titles of fiction and biography relating to this historical period published in Communist China from 1950 through 1989. Not every title is available for me to examine. The four hundred titles whose plot summary I read showed several thematic patterns. One is that the great majority of these books are combat stories about heroes and military victories. Another is that these books cover only the part of Sino-Japanese War history that involves the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and treat the rest of the war history as virtually non-existent. Examples from a few of the most famous titles will illustrate these patterns.

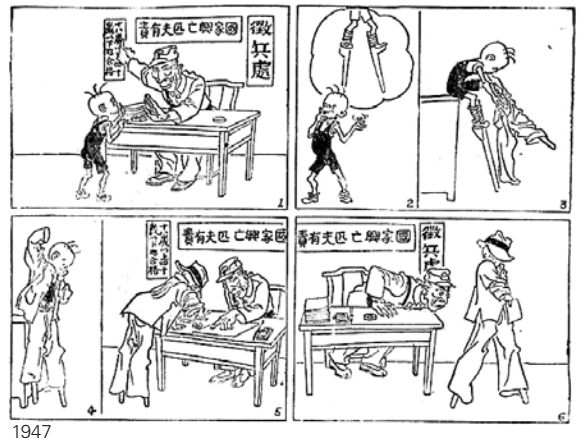
*Little Soldier Chang Ka-tse*<sup>3</sup> (Xu 1962) is perhaps the best-known Chinese children’s story about

the Sino-Japanese War. The novel has been adapted into at least five versions of LHH from 1963 to 1990, into a successful movie (1963), and into a television show (2004). The story introduces millions of Chinese young people to the Sino-Japanese War, not unlike the way Anne Frank's diary initiates awareness in American youth of the history of the Holocaust. *Little Soldier* is set in the Hebei province of northern China, a rural area under Japanese occupation. The thirteen-year-old Chang Ka-tse joins the underground army led by the Chinese Communist Party and becomes a scout, after his grandmother—Ka-tse's only guardian—is killed by the Japanese soldiers. As the novel shows, to this orphaned boy, army life not only means fighting the Japanese to revenge the loss of his grandmother and friend, it also means gaining a surrogate family, literacy education, and admiration from his young friends in the village. Ka-tse proves himself to be brave, smart, and great fun for his adult comrades. At the end of the story, his performance in a battle earns him the right to own a pistol and he decides to join the Communist Party. Overall, the novel tells about Ka-tse's growth, under the guidance of his adult Communist fellow fighters, from a naughty boy to a politically mature war hero.

Ka-tse is one of several teenage boy heroes—such as 12-year-old Yulai in *Yulai Mei You Si* [Little Hero Yulai] (Guan 1978/1990) and 14-year-old Haiwa in *Ji Mao Xin* [Feather Letter] (Hua 1949/1990)—all household names introduced to Chinese youth through children's literature. Most are fictional stories in which the hero survives, but the story of Wang Erxiao (Mao 1971) is based upon a true incident and portrays the death of the child protagonist. It nonetheless ends with another battle won by the guerillas, thanks to the risk Erxiao takes to lead the enemy into a Chinese ambush.

A large number of LHH titles are adapted from adult war novels that do not necessarily feature child protagonists, but they are nevertheless consumed avidly by young readers. Together, these stories mainly highlight the contributions made by the

*Although the American soldier in the story demonstrates courage, integrity, and agency, he plays more or less the role of the 'damsel in distress,' a drastically different role from what is typical for white males in children's war literature published in the United States.*



1947



1983

四川少儿版《三毛从军记》第一页

Page 1 of *Sanmao Joins the Army* in the old and new edition

Chinese Communist Party during World War II. LHH is a poor source of information on the military activities of the Chinese Nationalist government and of the allied forces in China. When they appear in LHH they are often portrayed negatively. In fact, *Sanmao Cong Jun Ji* [Sanmao Joins the Army] (Zhang 1947), an extremely popular comic book published shortly after World War II, was banned in Communist China. Sanmao, another boy soldier as brave and as amusing as Ka-tse, joins the ‘wrong’ army to fight the Japanese—the one led by the Nationalist government. When the book was finally republished in 1983 (Chengdu, China: Sichuan Shao Nian Er Tong), it had been revised to convey negative messages about the Nationalist government. For example, in the original edition Sanmao tricks the recruiter in order to be enlisted because he is underage. In the new edition, he becomes a soldier against his will, when the Nationalist military is rounding up male Chinese and forcing them to serve in the army (Feng 2006, p. 34-35).

*A story about atrocities in which the Communist superheroes do not show up to save the day was sensitive at best, and subversive at worst, when the government was trying to establish its legitimacy with the Chinese public.*

*Hengli En Chou Ji* [Henry’s Friends and Foe] (Fan 1983) is one of the few Chinese LHH titles I could locate to include ‘the Flying Tigers’—American aviators who fought in China during World War II. But this is not a story to celebrate the heroism of the Allies. Although the American soldier in the story demonstrates courage, integrity, and agency, he plays more or less the role of the ‘damsel in distress,’ a drastically different role from what is typical for white males in children’s war literature published

in the United States. Henry, an American fighter pilot, is shot down in Shanghai and rescued by the Chinese people who belong to the Communist-led New Fourth Army. Feeling distrustful of them, Henry flees, only to be betrayed by the so-called ‘rescuers’ from the Nationalist government and sold to the Japanese in exchange for gold. The New Fourth Army organizes a series of clever and breathtaking rescue actions, fights against the Japanese, the treacherous Nationalist officials, and a traitor within its own army, and finally brings Henry back to the American Air Force.

*A second reason that war crimes did not become a central topic of youth literature had to do with the utilitarian relationship between China and Japan.*

In a body of literature featuring military victories solely achieved by the Chinese Communist Party, where do stories about Japanese war crimes fit in? For at least two reasons, war crimes were not deemed appropriate topics in Communist China. First, a fledgling government could not afford to emphasize the history of numerous Chinese civilians and POWs succumbing to organized war crimes and never getting revenge. A story about atrocities in which the Communist superheroes do not show up to save the day was sensitive at best, and subversive at worst, when the government was trying to establish its legitimacy with the Chinese public. Books about Japanese war crimes were suppressed in the name of instilling national pride. For example, *Xi Jun he Xi Jun Zhan Zheng* [Bacteria and Bacterial Warfare] (Xu, 1951), a nonfiction children’s book on Japanese biological warfare, was criticized by a Party-sponsored magazine for portraying vulnerable and ‘obedient’ Chinese victims under Japanese oppression. This insult, the critic argues, gives child readers a sense

of inferiority about Chinese people (Ding 1953). Justice and the interests of the war victims were a second priority, when the new Chinese government was courting Japan's recognition of the Communist regime. In 1972, the two countries finally normalized their relationship through a joint communiqué in which the Chinese government officially renounced its demand for war reparation from Japan ('Joint Communiqué' 1972).

Even in pre-1990 combat stories with a happy ending, however, youth literature authors did not completely omit some of the atrocities the Japanese army committed. What civilians suffered can be an important driving force behind the protagonist's motives which occupies the center of the narrative. Chinese LHH manages to incorporate brief information about atrocities while keeping it in the background and in the margins. As examples from *Little Soldier Chang Ka-tse* show, this is achieved through positioning information about victimization before the final military victory, minimizing the number of pages devoted to atrocities, avoiding a direct visual depiction of crime in action, and, when traumatic violence does appear in images, presenting it with subtlety or viewed from a distance.

*To the embarrassment of Chinese lian huan hua authors and artists, after 1990, Japanese manga replaced native works as one of the most popular sources of reading material for Chinese youth...*

*Little Soldier Chang Ka-tse* (Xu and Zhang 1963), a LHH running 192 pages, contains 5 pages concerning the murder of civilians by the Japanese military. Page 4 shows the deliberate mismatch of text and illustration—Japanese atrocities are referred to verbally but not portrayed visually. The image shows the warm picture of a young



4. 奶奶“哦”了声。她叮嘱小嘎子说，部队上的消息没错。鬼子真是要“扫荡”了，以后放哨得加倍留神啊！



34. 小嘎子跑回家一看，见屋子里乱得象翻了天。奶奶躺在地上直喘气，脖子上有道刀伤，睁眼盯着他，问老钟叔可安全。



133. 第二天天不亮，城里和各据点的鬼子、伪军，出发合击虎口。他们扑了空，就杀人放火，抢劫粮食。临了，把高藤的死尸装进汽车，运回城里。

*Little Soldier Chang Ka-tse* in LHH, 1963

boy leaning against his grandmother, talking. The text in the grandmother's conversation balloon, however, says, 'Last time the devils came, both your mom and dad were killed. This time they sweep down here, who knows how many more will suffer?' Next, the Japanese army comes and severely wounds the grandmother, but the book avoids the violent confrontation between the old woman and the enemy. Instead, all we are given is three images, from page 34 to 36, showing the dying grandmother on the floor spending her last few minutes with her grandson in peace. The images spare us any close-up, gory view of the injury. A final image, on page 133, is a full view that presents characters in minuscule size. It is only with the help of the caption that we can discern what the picture tries to portray: the arson, murder, and looting committed by Japanese soldiers and their Chinese collaborators. The way *Little Soldier* marginalizes and minimizes the portrayal of Japanese wartime atrocities is typical of LHH published before 1990. Striking a balance between de-emphasizing victimization to be congruent with the political climate and including just enough to make sense of the story, these books provide young readers with little textual and visual information about Japanese atrocities during World War II.

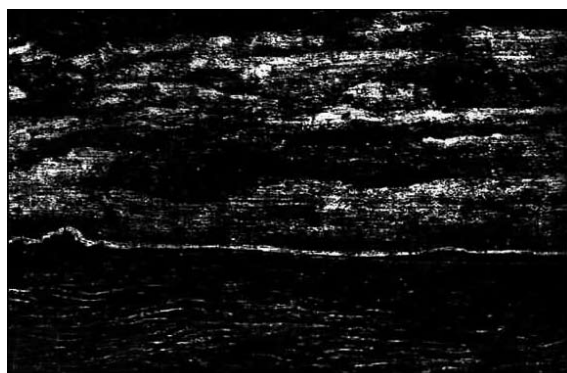
#### From the 1990s: About villains and victims

To the embarrassment of Chinese LHH authors and artists, after 1990, Japanese manga replaced native works as one of the most popular sources of reading material for Chinese youth, occupying over 90% of the LHH market in China by 1994 (Lin 1997). Some manga works published by Japanese revisionists are known to be a denial of Japanese wartime atrocities (Morris-Suzuki & Rimmer 2002). Although such titles are firmly kept out of mainland China, Chinese LHH authors are alerted to the Sino-Japanese rivalry in telling the story of World War II (Jiang 2001). The few new LHH titles about the Sino-Japanese War published in

mainland China after 1990 are often a response to the controversies around war crimes and have adopted subject matters drastically different from the past.

### *These three titles demonstrate the challenge of portraying violence and sexual assault verbally and visually for youth.*

*Nanjing de Xian Luo* [The Fall of Nanking] (Zhou, Da, & Zhu 1997) is a rare LHH title of historical fiction addressing the battle in Nanking, then China's capital city and the site of the notorious massacre launched by the Japanese occupation force in December 1937. Of this three-volume LHH, the first two are about combat history, and the third one focuses on the massacre. The book seems ambivalent about presenting the crimes in visual detail and clarity. All the illustrations are eerily dark, matching the nightmarish theme, but rendering the content of the pictures barely discernible. Still, the images depict the confrontation of the perpetrators and the victims, the bloody scene of crime in action, and the mass bodies. Sexual assault is reflected by innuendo, showing only fully dressed Japanese



97. 在灰尘濛濛的天宇下，寒风呜咽，江水滔滔。下关的江面，又一次成了血的河流，成了日本法西斯暴行的见证。

*A dark page portraying 'a bloody river,' from The Fall of Nanking in LHH, 1997*

soldiers and Chinese women and keeping the actual rape off camera.

Two more LHH titles about Japanese wartime atrocities were published in the 2000s. *Xue Lei 'Wei An Fu'* [The Bloody Tears of 'Comfort Women'] (Su et al. 2001) is the collaborative work of several comic strip artists and Su Zhiliang, a Chinese historian and the major investigator of the Japanese military brothel system in China. *Dong Shilang Xie Zui* [Azuma Shirō's Apology] (Zhu, Wang, Chen, Zhang, & Wang 2002) is the biography of a Japanese veteran. The book is partly based upon Azuma's wartime diary, which recorded the killings and atrocities of which he was a part. Zhu Chengshan, who wrote the text, is a major Chinese researcher of the Nanking massacre.

There are several distinct features about these two books. First, both are collaborations between academia and popular culture. Second, both rely upon primary sources and historical research to create the LHH as nonfiction, and include black-and-white historical photos to enhance the credibility of the book. Third, the illustrations confront war crimes in their cruelty, goriness, and massive scale. The two books, with a page size measuring twice that of traditional LHH, give generous space to each picture and even allow for double spreads. Clean line drawings are unequivocal about the events they portray; close views bring the audience face-to-face with the perpetrators and victims right at the crime scene.

These three titles demonstrate the challenge of portraying violence and sexual assault verbally and visually for youth. *The Fall of Nanking* maintains a gloomy tone throughout. The images have captured the horror of the subject to the point of being repulsive, which risks weakening the appeal of the book. On the other hand, both *The Bloody Tears* and *Apology* include images of nudity, sex, and quotations from the Japanese soldiers' obscene language. Viewed in isolation, at least a few pages convey the sensual pleasure of war crimes. Particularly problematic are the pages adapted from Azuma's diary, written from the perspective of a contented perpetrator. In one image in *Apology*, three Chinese females are forced to expose their private parts (not shown in the book), onto which a grinning Japanese soldier's eyes fall. One wonders how teenage boys and girls might differ in their reception of the image: whether they identify with the fear and humiliation of the weeping victims, who, according to the caption, are about to be raped and killed, or with the sexual curiosity displayed by the male soldier.

Another question is whether or not these books demonize the Japanese. All three focus upon the brutal crimes per se, and offer minimal explanation of the cause of the barbarous behavior among Imperial Japan's soldiers. In



*Lian huan hua thus presented several generations of Chinese youth with a lopsided view of Sino-Japanese War history.*

*The Fall of Nanking*, all Japanese soldiers appear as ‘barbarians’ with little variation. *The Bloody Tears* and *Apology* cover an array of Japanese people, from ruthless murderers, lewd rapists, and greedy looters, to the Japanese military and civilians who are sympathetic to the comfort of women, repent of their war crimes afterwards, and help publicize the history of atrocities to the postwar world and condemn the rightist deniers.

### Conclusion

The Sino-Japanese War youth literature published in mainland China after 1949 shows a striking contrast between quantitative richness and thematic homogeneity. The hundreds of LHH titles published from 1950 through the 1980s feature military victories achieved by the Chinese Communist Party during World War II. There was little political space for stories about the military

### Youth Literature Discussed

- Fan, Ruoyou, Qisheng Yan, and Qiguo Yan (2005) *Hengli en chou ji* [Henry’s friends and foe] Rev. ed. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Mei Shu Chu Ban She. Original work published 1983
- Guan, Hua (1990) ‘Yulai mei you si’ [Little hero Yulai] in *Zhongguo er tong wen xue da xi. xiao shuo yi* (Manting Pu ed), pp 738-744 Taiyuan, China: Xi Wang Chu Ban She (Reprinted from *Jie fang qu duan pian xiao shuo xuan* Beijing, China: Ren Min Wen Xue Chu Ban She, 1978)
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- Mao, Zhenyao (1971) *Kang ri xiao ying xiong* [A young anti-Japanese hero] Beijing, China: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She
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- Xu, Zeren (1951) *Xi jun he xi jun zhan zheng* [Bacteria and bacterial warfare] Shanghai, China: Shang Wu Chu Ban She
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activities of the other parties, including the Nationalist government and the allied forces, for stories about defeat, shame, and millions of lives wiped out by Imperial Japan's war machine. LHH thus presented several generations of Chinese youth with a lopsided view of Sino-Japanese War history.

It took more than three decades for Communist China to open up topics concerning Japanese wartime atrocities. By this time, Chinese LHH was unfortunately spiraling downward in popularity. Other formats of Chinese youth literature, which often supply LHH with stories for adaptation, declined after 1990 as well (Tang 2006). Given the small number of LHH works available on war crimes, it is not surprising to witness the flawed portrayal of violence and trauma in them. Many thematic holes remain in Chinese youth literature about the Sino-Japanese War. To foster a balanced view of Pacific War history among Chinese youth we need more stories with an impact similar to that of the *Little Soldier Chang Ka-tse*; stories that frankly and sensitively cover those facets of the war which have been left out of Chinese youth literature for too long.

*The author wishes to thank the library school at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign for sponsoring her data collection work in China, Fall 2007, and Professors Betsy Hearne and Christine Jenkins for patiently guiding her through the academic apprenticeship.*

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Six years after Imperial Japan invaded and annexed northeastern China in September 1931, a full-scale war broke out between China and Japan in July 1937. The Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), considered by historian Van Slyke as 'the true beginning of the Second World War' (2001), was fought against Japan by three allied forces—the Chinese Nationalist army commanded by Chiang Kai-shek, guerrilla forces and armies led by the Chinese Communist Party, and military aid provided by the United States. It ended with Imperial Japan's surrender after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945.

<sup>2</sup>It was not until the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), particularly in the 1980s, that Chinese families increasingly owned television sets.

<sup>3</sup>All Chinese names, fictional and real, in this paper appear in their customary sequence, which is family name first, and given name last.

# The Story of History: Being One of "Them"

by JOSEFINE OTTESEN



Award winning Danish author Josefine Ottesen has published over 60 works of fantasy and fiction for young people.



*In this article based on her talk at the IBBY World Congress in Denmark, Josefine Ottesen writes about the power of story in her own life, in her writing of fantasy, and in helping children overcome struggles and take charge of their own lives instead of becoming the victims of others.*

There was a low, pale winter sun that day. I was sitting in the rays of sunshine in front of the terrace door, playing with some plastic animals. I was around eight years old. At the other end of the room, my mother was sitting with a friend. Their voices were low but intense. Something important was being said. Stories not meant for my ears.

*...in those few seconds a great part of my identity was formed. I realized that I was one of THEM*

Slowly and very discreetly, my animals moved closer and closer to the table where my mom and her friend were sitting, and I ended up underneath it without anyone noticing. Here, I overheard the story of my mother's life from her childhood in Budapest, Hungary at the

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beginning of the last century. How her playmates tied her to the fence with her arms spread out saying: "The Jews crucified Jesus; now we'll crucify you!" I also heard about the time when her uncle, shaking with fear, showed up at their flat in central Budapest shortly after World War I, telling how he'd just been on a tram, when a group of Red or White revolutionaries, I don't remember which, had pulled out everybody who looked Jewish and hanged them from the nearest lamp post. For some reason, they had overlooked him, although he looked very Jewish.

She had moved to Germany in the 1920's and then had to flee from the Nazis in 1934. First she went to Denmark, and then had to continue to Sweden in 1943 with two small children.

She was upset; very upset. I could not see her face from my position under the table, but I could hear her voice shaking.

*The fear of being persecuted, deprived of one's dignity and even killed, kept me in a constant state of stress, and I passed that on, unwittingly, to my own children.*

When she got to the part where she had to tell about the loss of almost her entire family in the concentration camps, I wished I'd stayed in the rays of sunshine by the door. It was horrible to hear of the deaths of her beloved relatives, and it was terrifying to cope with the knowledge of human brutality and cruelty and especially with the total lack of reason.

When she'd finished, I remember the silence that followed and the sound of the clock ticking – and in those few seconds a great part of my identity was formed. I realized that I was one of THEM; someone who could be persecuted for no reason at all – even killed for having done nothing, except for being who I was.

### **To be or not to be ... who decides?**

It was too big a revelation and for several years, I tried to ignore it, until one day, a teacher decided to show us, a group of 15-year old teenagers, "Nacht und Nebel" – a documentary about what the Allied and Russian troops saw when they reached the concentration camps in Germany at the end of the war.

Then I clearly remembered my mother's stories, and now I was too old to just push the thoughts aside. I was a Jew, I had to accept it, like it or not.

It was not because I was brought up in Judaism, especially since my father was a Danish vicar and I was baptized, like the rest of my Danish family. And it was not because I was an integrated part of the relatively strong Danish-Jewish community – my mother herself, having been brought up in a very secular culture, had never had much to do with other Jewish people. The reason I was Jewish, was solely because someone else had decided so!

I couldn't do much about it, so I tried to pay as little attention to it as possible. Not until I gave birth to my own children and they grew older, did I realise that even though I tried to keep that part of my story really low-key, it still had an enormous impact on how I brought them up. The fear of being persecuted, deprived of one's dignity and even killed, kept me in a constant state of stress, and I passed that on, unwittingly, to my own children.

This story of history, which was not even my own, but my mother's, filled and controlled a great part of my life and my way of observing the world. I would always buy lots of dried food, such as beans and rice, so we would have supplies if we needed to escape. I would have nightmares of having to live on the road, and would always worry if we all had good boots to wear, just in case ... I would be very concerned with how my family was regarded by others – they should do well in school, be polite and well-behaved.

It was certainly time, I discovered, to confront

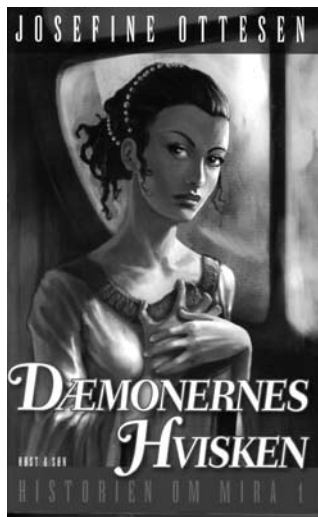
myself, if I did not want my kids to inherit the story I had inherited from my mother. And so I did.

### The stories of others

I started reading a lot of literature about concentration camps, which I had avoided, up to this point. Immediately, essential questions started to pop up.

*Why is it that some people can go through horrible experiences and come out stronger on the other side, whereas others fall apart?*

*How is it possible to make one group of people hate another group when they have lived peacefully side-by-side with each other before?*



*In that way, he took on history and made the cruelty and inhumanity part of his own story. So he transformed himself from being a pitiful victim to somebody with a mission: to tell the story of the cruelty he had seen and suffered.*

And here my journey began into the universe, that would end up being my trilogy, "The Story of Mira."

My work has always been very inspired by folktales, myths and legends. For me the non-realistic universes offer the best metaphors for what I call "the inner landscape" – the emotional, subconscious world I imagine we all share, no matter where or who we are.

The challenge is always how to find the right symbols and images that represent the essential elements of the story I am working with – symbols and images that hopefully will strike a chord with my readers.

The first question "Why do some people come out stronger on the other side of severe traumas and others fall apart?" led me to books by Otto Frankl, Jean Amery, Primo Levy, and others who had actually survived the concentration

camps. The main message from the survivors seemed to be: You have to keep looking out through the fence and hang on to the idea that your suffering, on some level, has a meaning.

Imre Kertész's story of how he came back to Budapest, having survived the Holocaust, made a great impression on me. When he told his few remaining relatives what had happened to him, they felt deeply sorry for him, but he insisted that his survival through the horrible years of concentration camp was meant to be.

He had been chosen to be a witness and had been given a mission to tell others what had happened. In that way, he took on history and made the cruelty and inhumanity part of his own story. So he transformed himself from being a pitiful victim to somebody with a mission: to tell the story of the cruelty he had seen and suffered.

*One could say that trying to bring in a kind of a meta-layer on political and sociological issues in a fantasy novel is a bit ambitious, but then on the other hand that was what I set out to do, and I was rather determined to fulfill it*

At the same time I was introduced to a book by French psychiatrist Boris Curulnik. In Danish, the title of his book translates into "The Ugly Duckling," using the Hans Christian Andersen tale as a hint of the story of becoming a beautiful swan although nobody helps you and you go through severe suffering in your life. Curulnik very clearly states that to survive traumatic events whilst retaining your humanity, you need to be able to re-tell the story of yourself, so that what has happened is transformed into something meaningful to you.

Curulnik presents the case of a small African boy who sees his whole family being massacred. For some reason the attackers overlook him. Paralysed with fear, he stays in the empty village. A few days later, the militia comes back, and this time he reacts by hiding himself under a blanket. Although they search the whole place, they don't find him. When they are gone, he hurries to the next village to seek shelter. When he tells his story to two adults, they are, of course, terrified and clasp their hands in fear, while one of them says, "Imagine if you had sneezed!"

*"Memes" as a term became a good way for me to understand how ideas and thought patterns can spread like a virus, and why it seems so difficult to fight against them.*

Curulnik meets this boy in a refugee camp, where the boy keeps tickling himself in the nose

with a blade of grass, until he starts to bleed. When Curulnik reveals his story, it becomes evident that this boy is trying to recapture his own story. He wants to be able to control a sneeze at any time. You might say that this boy has been traumatized twice: first through the horrible experience and afterwards by being deprived of his story: he actually made it, he survived!

Curulnik's book became a turning point for me in my writing process. This was a story I would really like to tell: How do we re-tell the story of our lives so that it becomes meaningful and establishes us as powerful and active persons in our own lives, instead of being passive victims of someone else's aggression and will?

#### **Which stories do we pass on?**

The next question was more difficult: *What makes one group accept, all of a sudden, that their fellow citizens are no longer humans but less than animals, not worthy of living and so dangerous that they need to be annihilated?*

For one thing, Nazism, and all the horrible deeds that it brought with it, was due to a very specific historical situation. But genocides have happened both before Nazism and after, so I had to find a way of explaining how an idea like this could establish itself, more or less overnight, in a larger group of people. It was a difficult task – mainly because most of the writing on a subject like this is very political and closely related to specific historical periods and what I needed was more of an archetypical explanation.

One could say that trying to bring in a kind of a meta-layer on political and sociological issues in a fantasy novel is a bit ambitious, but then on the other hand that was what I set out to do, and I was rather determined to fulfill it – just ask my editor!

By coincidence, I had a conversation with a woman who works as a nurse with immigrants to Denmark. She told me about "Memes" – a way of describing cultural thought-patterns. I went on

the Internet and found out that “memes” had 35,800,000 hits! Wikipedia told me: *A meme is any thought or behaviour that can be passed from one person to another by learning or imitation. Memes propagate themselves and can move through the cultural sociosphere in a manner similar to the contagious behaviour of a virus.*

Apparently, effective memes hook on to a more primitive part of the brain, outside the control of the conscious mind, and they seem to spread especially easily if they relate to sex, food or fear.

This made sense to me. “Memes” as a term became a good way for me

to understand how ideas and thought patterns can spread like a virus, and why it seems so difficult to fight against them. But how to use this pseudo-scientific term “memes” in a fantasy novel? I really needed some strong metaphors to show how dangerous these “mental viruses” are – I needed a metaphor that would evoke the image of something swift and uncontrollable!

For me, demons had the right qualities. Almost every culture in the world knows demons under one name or another. Their common quality is the fear of something powerful that, from one minute to the next, can change your friend into your enemy – into something inhuman and cruel – and that, by some strange magic, can possess one’s mind and turn that person into a monster without empathy.

The most interesting thing for me at this point was the fact that the primary channel for new memes and how they spread like “mental viruses” was through storytelling. Stories told from one generation to the next, stories spread

worldwide through the media and the internet. It happens SO fast! No doubt: Memes were “Demons’ Tools”!

And if you need proof, just look at where totalitarian regimes strike first – controlling and spreading stories!

### Which stories do we live in?

Little by little, the theme of my new book formed around two main topics: *How do you retell your own story, so your life becomes meaningful in spite of horrible traumas, and which stories do you accept and pass on?*

*I want to give to my readers a message:  
Be the author of your own life story!  
And to do that, children need stories.  
Lots of them! They can never have  
enough tools in their “story toolbox.”*



Setting my story universe in "fantasy time" gave me the freedom I needed to create an "inner landscape" covered with rough mountains, wild rivers, maze-like swamps and fragile floating islands. Mira, my main character, is a girl from a wealthy family with a happy life in first class. She lives in a well-regulated city. But times change and, all of a sudden, she becomes a victim of the story of her tribe. She has to flee into the wilderness and, to save herself and her loved ones, she has to get in charge of her own story. To do that she has to learn to control the demons that spread the evil and keep them on a leash. And no, you can't rid the world of evil and cruelty, but you can consider how you want to deal with it.

*Bring stories to children and young people that open their hearts and minds and tell them how to overcome struggles; give them the tools to take charge of their own lives instead of becoming the victims of others.*

In the course of telling the story, it becomes clear to Mira that it's possible for her to change her story. If she chooses to stick to the old ideas about herself and the rest of her tribe as powerless victims of demonically possessed tormentors, she – and many of those she loves – will die. On the other hand, if she dares to create her own story, starting out from her actual experiences, the story about "the others" becomes more diverse and positive. She also reinforces an active and human picture of herself which others can relate to.

Working with this novel became a real eye-opener, not only about how much the story of my life, told by my mother, *became* the story of my life without me questioning it until very late in life, but also about the importance of my job as a storyteller.

For me, there is no doubt: the more stories people of all ages are exposed to, the more possibilities they get to create a nuanced story of themselves. And the better we become at editing the stories ourselves, the less we get locked into an inability to act and into repeating patterns.

So I'm on a mission! I want to give to my readers a message: Be the author of your own life story! And to do that, children need stories. Lots of them! They can never have enough tools in their "story toolbox."

Life isn't easy and, for a lot of children, it's a struggle. We can't take the burden off their shoulders, but we can give them hope by telling stories that can help them map their own "inner landscapes."



### The Crystal Heart

In the "Story of Mira," storytelling is used as a way of teaching youngsters about life. Mira, like all the other young children, has to have the tribal mark branded behind the ear. It hurts and to help her deal with the pain she is told this story:

*Once upon a time, a king and a queen had a child. A little princess. They gave her everything she could possibly wish for to keep her happy, but then one*

*day, when she was fifteen, she started crying. Nobody understood why, but finally she told them that she could not bear the thought that winter was coming and all the flowers would die. They tried to comfort her. The flowers would come back the following spring, they said, but she couldn't stop crying. She wanted summer to last forever. Her parents had to send for the Wizard. But even though he was very skilled, he couldn't stop the changing of the seasons. Then the princess cried even harder. Her parents fell on their knees and begged him. "Do something! Solve this problem! Our daughter has to be happy!"*

*"I can help you," he said, "but you might regret it later."*

*"Just do it. We can't bear to see our daughter in such pain."*

*So the wizard took the young girl's bleeding heart and exchanged it for a new heart of shining crystal.*

*"Now she'll feel no more sorrow and pain," he said.*

*And so it was. The princess was again happy – smiling and giggling. After some years her parents*

*thought it was time to find her a husband. Lots of princes passed through, but she never really cared for any of them.*

*Finally the Wizard was brought back again.*

*"Please, make her love somebody," they asked him.*

*"I'm sorry," he said. "Once you've chosen the crystal heart to avoid the pain and sorrow of life, then you'll never be able to love."*

And to all of you reading this: Bring stories to children and young people that open their hearts and minds and tell them how to overcome struggles; give them the tools to take charge of their own lives instead of becoming the victims of others. A Danish author Vagn Lundbye once said: "It's never too late to have a happy childhood." He's right; you can't change whatever terrible experiences you have been through, but you can keep your heart open and choose how you will incorporate what happens into your own story. Will you give more anger and revenge to the world, or will you pass on stories of empathy and forgiveness?

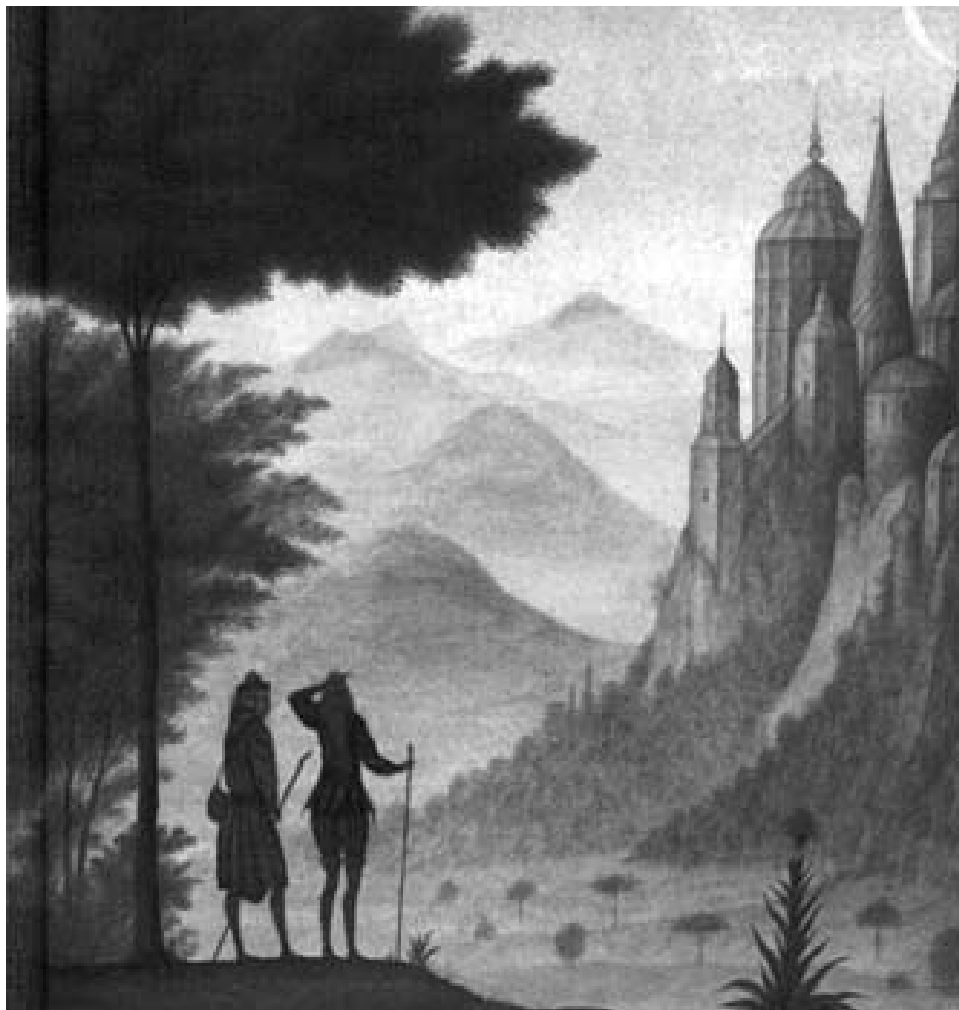
This is the sixth and last book of the series featuring children's beloved hero, the little yellow fish. On his tenth birthday, Little Triangle-Fish researches his family background. He discovers that his parents, who belonged to different fish societies, broke all the rules with their union and caused a great war., an irrational war, as all wars are. Little Triangle-fish was their child, born of love. This is a contemporary anti-war book that shows the irrationality of war and the fact that war can only be based on lies and prejudices. It shows that the antidote to war and hatred is to replace these negatives with love and respect for all creatures.

Vassiliki Nika



### *The Little Triangle-fish's Birthday or How Love Conquered War*

Athena: Patakes, Spuritakia 2007  
72 pp ISBN 9789601622583  
(fiction)



# The Life and Work of Josefine Ottesen

by BENT RASMUSSEN

translated by David Young

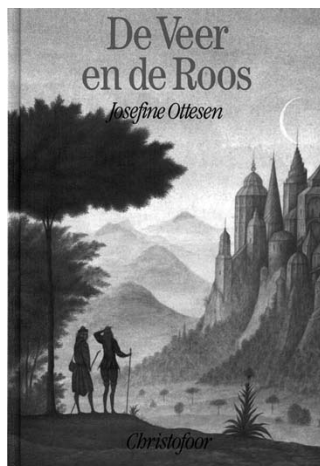


Bent Rasmussen is the editor of *The School Library*, periodical of The Association of Danish School Librarians, and a former educational adviser.

Josefine Ottesen's life has crossed several continents and carried over into stories of fantasy and drama. Born in Copenhagen in 1956, she grew up in various places in Denmark because of her parents' work (and divorce). She finished secondary school in 1975, after which she entered Herning College's Drama Course, then completed her education as an actor at the Dell'Arte School of Physical Theatre in California, USA. She took an extended training as a director at the British Theatre Association in London in 1986-87. In 1997, she was awarded a humanities degree in Dramaturgy from Århus University in Denmark. She has also taken a large number of shorter courses in various theatre disciplines. Since 1977, her address has been in Svendborg on the island of Fyn (Funen), where she lives with her musician husband, a son and a daughter. Her son, especially, has been the source of much inspiration in her writing.

Josefine Ottesen's writing began early, keeping a diary when she was 12-13 years old. She noticed that the process of writing also enabled her to work out some important things in her mind. Early in her twenties,

the diary writing began to develop into stories, mostly into fairy tales. One day she showed some of her stories to an acquaintance, who advised her to send them to a publisher. This she did and the publisher accepted them immediately. In 1983, she thus made her debut with *Princess Morningbloom and the Lindorm*, which contains two tales illustrated by Flemming Quist Møller. After this, *The Feather and the Rose* came out in 1986, receiving the Danish Ministry of Culture's Children's Book Prize the following year.



### Three trilogies

Josefine Ottesen has written over 60 books, so there isn't space here for a complete review of her writing, but there are three trilogies that stand out as beacons.

"The Warrior" trilogy is a very violent and exciting story. In *On the Furthest Island* (2001) the boy Odd kills the sorceress to avoid being sacrificed and has to flee as an outlaw. Many trials await him before his dream of being a warrior becomes a reality. In *Behind the Castle Walls* (2002) Odd is accepted into the King's Guard. His daring and fighting spirit bring him promotion and success but also problems, and in *Across Open Water* (2003) Odd is required to choose between his duty to his king and his own opportunities for career and love. The trilogy is written – says Josefine Ottesen – for those who don't always enjoy reading books, namely boys around 12-13 years old.



The second trilogy – "The Mira Chronicles" – is actually a Holocaust story, inspired by Josefine's mother who was of Hungarian Jewish descent. "The Mira Chronicles" tell the tale of the young girl Mira who, as the daughter of the Royal Librarian, belongs to the ruling class in the country of Dakja. But when the king dies and power changes hands, hatred is kindled towards the Truva clan, the one to which Mira belongs. The first book in the trilogy is called *The Whisper of Demons* (2005). In *The Queen's Tear* (2006), Mira is taught to become a Demon Conqueror and she soon finds herself up against enormous powers and has to accept responsibilities that she is perhaps not ready for. The action in *The Crystal Heart* (2006) puts additional pressure on Mira: she is the only one who can battle against the demons that have possessed the inhabitants of Dakja.



In the third trilogy, "The Dead Lands," only the first book *Golak* (2008) has been published at the time of this writing. It is an excellently written, dystopian, futuristic novel. The action takes place many years after a devastating war. It is a dark, fateful tale about a 16 year-old young man, Jonah, who lives with his family in a technically and culturally backward mountain village, where life is dominated by poverty and

passive acquiescence to authority and religion. Around this isolated village live fierce tribes of scary, deformed mutants – the so-called Golaks. The Golaks are feared by all and often attack the village inhabitants if they venture beyond the protection of the village walls. Josefine Ottesen describes this gruesome, pitiless world in a convincing manner. We can hardly wait for parts 2 and 3.

*It is important to her that the main character – especially if it's a child – can find an adult with whom she/he can test ideas and receive feedback.*

#### From nobody to somebody

An examination of Ottesen's work reveals several significant themes. Most of her characters have adult mentors or guides. It is important to her that the main character – especially if it's a child – can find an adult with whom she/he can test ideas and receive feedback. In addition, she places a lot of importance on the main character having the opportunity to undergo development during the course of the book. The reader must experience that the person he/she identifies with in the book changes from being nobody to being somebody. Ottesen's writing has received many significant prizes and awards, including the following.

#### Prizes

- 1987 Danish Ministry of Culture's Children's Book Prize for *The Feather and the Rose*
- 2004 Municipal School Library Association's Author Prize for the trilogy "The Warrior"  
Children's Librarians' Culture Prize for the easy-reader series "The Lord of the Dragons"  
"The Warrior" trilogy accepted to IBBY's "List of Honour" in connection with the international Hans Christian Andersen Award
- 2005 Nominated for the Nordic Children's Book Prize  
Bookshop Assistants' Children's Book Prize for *The Whisper of Demons*
- 2006 Collected works nominated for IBBY's Hans Christian Andersen Award  
Danish Radio's Orla Prize for *The Whisper of Demons*
- 2009 Nominated for Astrid Lindgren Award in 2010



#### Websites featuring Josefine Ottesen and her work

[www.josefineottesen.dk](http://www.josefineottesen.dk)  
[www.dedoedeland.dk](http://www.dedoedeland.dk)  
[www.krigeren.com](http://www.krigeren.com)  
[www.roselil.dk](http://www.roselil.dk)  
[www.historienommira.dk](http://www.historienommira.dk)  
[www.hullerik.dk](http://www.hullerik.dk)



# Let's Share the Dream

Stories for Children in Angola



*Ondjaki shares a brief history of Angolan children's literature along with his place in that literary and historic landscape, the basis for his speech given at the IBBY 31st World Congress held in Denmark in September, 2008.*

*"... children's literature was born and put about in Angola in the Journal de Angola supplement and by Rádio-Piô – at that time, and for many more years, the most lauded informational and educational channel for children.... An interesting phenomenon was that a part of our listeners, a great part of those who wrote to us and who wanted to collaborate sending us stories, traditional tales and riddles, were actually youngsters serving time in the army..."*

*Dario de Melo, Angolan writer*

By ONDJAKI<sup>1</sup>



The author Ondjaki now works and lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Tracing a broad history of children's literature in my country necessarily involves understanding a basic history of Angola itself, beginning with its existence as a country colonized for 500 years. The Portuguese arrived in the Congo in 1482, in an expedition led by Diogo Cão. The subsequent political, religious and cultural impositions of colonization resulted in successive inhibitions and even prohibitions of local forms of expression. Centuries later, even after the abolition of slavery, Angolans, blacks and mulattos alike, suffered from continuous social discrimination. Even some white

people born in Angola were called “second class whites.”

*The resistance made an impact on me from very early on in my life.*

The resistance made an impact on me from very early on in my life. Isolated to the southern and eastern parts of the country, the revolt – created and nurtured by the very people that had already been victims of revolt themselves – was militarily controlled by the Portuguese colonial regime. Yet, an Angolan nation came into being, with the continuous presence of people that had come from across the ocean, the people they had encountered, and the people that were to be born out of this cultural mix. The areas near the shore were inhabited by the most powerful people, politically or financially. Thus, through the years, the Angolan interior was “conquered.”

Eventually, these organized resistances also reached the urban centres. Cities like Benguela, Lubango, Huambo and Luanda all became centres for ideological organizations fighting colonial occupation. At the beginning of the 20th century, some journalists and intellectuals even ventured to publish texts expressing favourability towards Angolan independence and autonomy.

*It was as if the foundation and the destiny of the country were always tightly connected to books.*

However, being constantly more satisfied with the great riches obtained in Angola and other African colonies, the Portuguese regime insisted that these territories were only “provinces of Portugal.” The awareness among some intellectuals and individuals from the political and cultural circles gave birth to several independence movements which also gave rise to the voices of new writers.

**The writers and the war(s)**

One of the most well-known Angolan writers, Pepetela, besides being a guerrilla and a commander at the northern front, began discovering his vocation during the guerrilla years. *Ngunga's Adventures*, one of the most widely read books in Angola both before and after independence, was written for Angolan children and was meant as a manual on the Portuguese language and cultural references.

*At the beginning of the 20th century, prose and chronicles were the two great arts of the nation's writers. After the 50s, and until today, Angola has been the birthplace of a great number of poets coming from all corners of the country.*

*Originally, Ngunga wasn't meant to be a novel. I was in the East making a census of MPLA bases. For the first time, the number of bases, the number of men and the number of guns were going to be known. I went from base camp to base camp – and at the same time I attended the school classes, helping the teachers.... I started to realize that the kids had only the school's books when learning Portuguese and I concluded that it was necessary to work out auxiliary texts, and thus Ngunga started to take shape.<sup>2</sup>*

Written and published in 1973, in stencil, by the MPLA's cultural services, *Adventuras de Ngunga* is an educational story about a young boy with a very determined and honest nature, who chooses the same path as other “pioneers” joining the MPLA guerrillas, consequently growing into a man and learning to think independently. MPLA stands for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

Another big name in Angolan literature is Luandino Vieira.<sup>3</sup> He joined MPLA very early on, having been imprisoned for conspiring against

the Portuguese colonial regime. But even in prison, sentenced to 14 years imprisonment, he continued writing. Even a guerrilla fighter like Agostinho Neto, a medical doctor and poet who in 1975 became the first president of the Republic of Angola, divided his time between political and literary activities for a long time. It was as if the foundation and the destiny of the country were always tightly connected to books. Indeed, Angola has been the birthplace of a great number of poets coming from all corners of the country since the 1950s.

At the beginning of the 20th century, prose and chronicles were the two great arts of the nation's writers. As with all other struggles around the world, the civil war generated other urgencies and priorities, just as the Angolan cultural sector also suffered many privations. However, during the colonial war, until 1975, and even during the times of the subsequent civil wars, literary production never ceased despite these somewhat difficult circumstances.

### The 1980s

With the social and economic strains becoming ever more accentuated, particularly in the interior of the country where the war was the most intense, the cities became the destination for thousands of people arriving mainly from the southern and eastern parts of Angola. The capital city of Luanda, residence of the political and financial elite and the main urban and cultural centre of the country, received and accumulated the ethnical, cultural and social tendencies from almost any part of what is the territory of Angola.

This reality is clearly echoed in the national literature. Luanda and its urban characteristics became the predominant literary focus. During the 1980s, Angolan literature went through a very fertile period within the poetry genre, as well, even traveling beyond Luanda. Names like Ruy

Duarte de Carvalho and, later on, Ana Paula Tavares or João Maimona, emerged on the poetic scene with more modern and abstract voices, though still dealing with aspects of Angolan traditions. In their poetry, the city and the countryside were either in conflict or living in harmony.

*The book **A caixa**, by Manuel Rui, can be considered the first post-independence children's book.*

In the 1980s, children's literature saw its most prolific years. Works by Dario de Melo, Gabriela Antunes and Cremilda Lima were published.<sup>4</sup> Tightly connected to aesthetic issues, however, a preoccupation with putting about a literature that evolved around aspects firmly establishing Angolan culture also manifested itself. In the specific case of Angola, which had adopted Portuguese as its official language, another question arose,

namely the role of the so-called national languages (Umbundu, Kimbundu, Kikongo, Tchokwe etc.) At the same time, honouring and respecting children's literature as a literary genre was a priority.

*"Children's literature is, first and foremost, literature. It presupposes art, beauty and delight, and does not reject the word children's."*<sup>5</sup>

The book *A caixa* (The Box), by Manuel Rui, can be considered the first post-independence children's book. In 1977, Maria Eugénia Neto, wife of the first Angolan president, published *E nas florestas os bichos falaram* which was awarded the Honorary Prize by UNESCO's Cultural Committee. During these years, the Angolan Writers Association also contributed to the publication of various works.



### The 1990s

Luanda remained the cultural and political centre of Angola for a long time. The concentration of cultural powers, actors and artists, and the artistic dynamic was in Luanda – save the rare exceptions, organized by the government, in other cities that the war inhabited.

After the 1992 elections, and even the subsequent fresh outbreak of war, the change in the political system made an immediate impact at all levels. Editors re-emerged and new ones saw the light of day. And they all made room for prose, poetry and children's literature. However, there were few writers writing.

Even though Dário de Melo was still publishing books at the end of the 1990s, the most prolific writers were Celestina Fernandes and Cremilda Lima. In 1992, Maria João, coming from Lubango, published *The School and Miss Milk-Can*, an interesting reflection on the milk cans used in schools due to the lack of desks. Over many years, especially right after our independence, kids used to bring empty milk cans from their homes, as a substitute for desks or chairs. In this way children were able to sit and teaching was not interrupted due to the lack of material. When I was in the fifth grade, even in my classroom in Luanda, there were only a few desks every morning. They used to be moved to other classrooms during the afternoon or night shifts. So we used this huge bookshelf laid horizontally, to replace the desks. Others would use part of the windowsill to write down their notes.

From 2000 and onwards, new writers have entered the scene of children's literature: Yola Castro, John Bela, and myself with *Ynari: The Girl with the Five Braids*<sup>6</sup>.

*After the 1992 elections, and even the subsequent fresh outbreak of war, the change of the political system made an immediate impact at all levels. Editors re-emerged and new ones saw the light of day. And they all made room for prose, poetry and children's literature.*

### My history

I grew up in Luanda, during the 1980s, reading some of the books mentioned above. Socialism, both the political and even civilian system at that time, constituted the essence of my educational system. (Angola underwent the political transition to democracy in 1991.) Geographically, Angola is divided into 18 provinces, but the capital city of Luanda has almost always manifested itself as a country apart from the rest of the nation. Due to social and political matters touched upon here, and also parallel to what happens in all other countries in the world, the capital city becomes the principal centre of all kinds of power and influences.

The children that I could read about in Angolan literature, or even Mozambican literature handed out in school, were real children accompanying me in my everyday life. With the exception of stories that depicted the time prior to independence, many of the stories – for example the ones by Manuel Rui, and above all his book *Quem me dera ser onda* – depicted concrete aspects of the reality I lived in, thus making them very tangible. Furthermore, it was my generation that lived through what the literature about the 1980s was to describe later on.

The linguistic aspects (references to music, and the *estigas*<sup>7</sup>) and the social aspects (demeanour associated with the 1980s, political speeches and the assimilation by children, of the socialist system, ways of dressing, social rules, etc.) that appeared in literary works were immediately identified by

us as being very real. This was the beauty and power of literature; what was written, even though a result of the artist's imagination, was at the same time the reality of our daily lives.

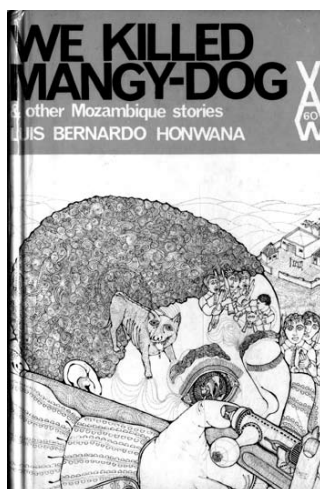
The “street” and the “school” always made up the sacred spaces of our childhood. The famous phrase that we read in our schoolbooks

and reference books, “the pen is the pioneer's weapon,” became our rule of conduct in life. The truth was that revolution was carried out through books, through the pen, through reading materials and through texts. Some among us, and I include myself in this group, believed in the power of the pen and the power of the book.

The story we read in school – *We Killed the Mangy Dog* by the Mozambican writer Luis Bernardo Honwana – influenced a whole generation. The same for the incredible tale *Wish I Was a Wave*.

In the first case, this “mangy dog” was an old and sick dog in the surrounding areas of Maputo that is supposed to be killed by one boy with an air-pressure gun. A group of boys is authorized by a Portuguese white man to kill the dog, because it is disturbing the neighbourhood. Only one girl, Isaura, tries to defend the animal until the end. One of the boys, a

*We Killed the Mangy Dog by the Mozambican writer Luis Bernardo Honwana that we read in school influenced a whole generation.*



black boy among the others who are white, does not want to kill the mangy dog anymore. But the circumstances and the group pressure lead him to the easiest choice. In *Wish I Was a Wave*, Manuel Rui tells another story with children: A father brings home a pig to their eight-floor building, to be killed a few months later. But the kids love the pig right away, so they will do everything to save him.

In both stories, the political content was not explicit for us, as kids, but the rhythm and the language used were very powerful. In fact, some of that African way of writing, that really has to do with our way of being with the world and with the languages, has remained with me and my writing, I believe.

In 2000, one week before the end of the Angolan civil war, I felt a very strong urge to write a story for children. I only knew that I wanted to write about a girl, with five braids, who made immense sacrifices trying to bring an end to the war that was all around her. This girl and this story is my book *Ynari: a menina das cinco tranças*, in which Ynari loses her braids one by one in the five villages at war. The war between these five villages breaks out because the people in each village have lost one sense or the other: the ability to hear, to taste, to see, etc. At the end of the story, Ynari, after having resolved all the wars, goes looking for “a very old elderly person who destroys words” and asks her to destroy the word “war.” I believe that any person of my generation, living through those interminable years of war, would have liked to meet that elderly woman.

The main reference point in *Ynari: a menina das cinco tranças* is the open space of the countryside, my own diligent search for something I did not know very well. Being born and raised in Luanda, the interior of Angola, it was a mystical and inaccessible space due to the successive wars. The book *Ynari*, then, serves as a search for a lesson of my own: for the powers of the land and the magic of what cannot be explained, but must be lived.

What I had indeed lived and knew well were the streets and the schools of Luanda. In my most recent children's book, once again the city children appear, with their magic powers and their serious decisions. When the houses in a certain neighbourhood are all threatened by the presence of big construction (the famous construction of the Mausoleum that was to become the resting place for the embalmed body of comrade President Agostinho Neto), the children react and make secret decisions. They will have to knock down the enormous concrete construction before “the adults” decide to knock down their neighbourhood. Wrongly interpreted as an attack on the first Angolan president, in my opinion, the intention of the book is merely to draw attention to the



*To a child, under the power of purity, everything, including magic and fears, gains a bigger meaning.*

powerful effects of children's universe: they defend the parts that make up the roots of their hearts and of their world. And a house, or a neighbourhood, can make up that world. To a child, under the power of purity, everything, including magic and fears, gains a bigger meaning.

Another one of my children's books, as yet unpublished, is called *A bicicleta que tinha bigodes*. It is a simple homage to the Angolan writer Manuel Rui. In the story, presumably taking place in the street where the writer lives, a group of kids are trying to create a written story so they can win the bicycle that Rádio Nacional is offering as a prize for the best children's story of Luanda. Knowing that "uncle Rui" is a writer, a rumour spreads in the street that his beard contains letters, accents and magical phrases that are put in a box, every Thursday, when his wife "sweeps" his beard with a miniature broom. The group of friends hatches up a plan to steal the box, but eventually, because of a friendship with the writer, the protagonist does not commit the crime. They send only a sincere letter to Rádio Nacional, clumsy, written in Portuguese, but full of grammatical errors, and addressed to the comrade president stating that he should offer a bicycle to all Angolan children. Here I come full

circle, with a tribute to the writer Manuel Rui.

I believe that Angolan children's literature is being reborn. This is especially due to the economic boom experienced in the country, as well as to the way the peace process has facilitated creativity and, finally, to the rise of the phenomenon that I believe will be the so-called "urban orality." This will be the outcome of a social mixture of a generation born in Luanda, with roots in other parts of the country. Also the well-to-do generations of Luanda have had the opportunity to travel and study abroad, and are now returning home influenced by other stories and echoes of other realities.

From a personal point of view, I am content with the "literary signs" that point towards new productions of national literature, and new tendencies that embrace urban orality phenomena like "estigas," anecdotes, and the theatrical style of Luanda life. I'm beginning to see the incorporation in music, in theatre and in literature, of the most prominent social questions of our everyday lives. It is thus that you enrich literature, regenerating life. Because life – with all its civilian agents, nurturing creativity and tenderness – is what we call "culture."

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>See also [www.kazukuta.com/ondjaki](http://www.kazukuta.com/ondjaki)

<sup>2</sup>Pepetela, in an interview given to the website "Portal da literatura".

<sup>3</sup>Although born in Portugal, Luandino Vieira always considered himself Angolan. He was sent to prison by the Salazar regime's secret police in 1959, accused of having connections to the independence movement, but released shortly after. In 1961, the Portuguese Writers Association (PWA) decided to award him the Castelo Branco Prize for his book *Luanda*. That decision made PIDE/DGS force the disintegration of PWA. That same year, Luandino Vieira was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment. He served the sentence at the Tarrafal prison in Cap Verde. He returned to Portugal in 1972, but on restricted liberty terms and with fixed residence in Lisbon. In 1975, following Independence, he returned to Angola where he stayed until 1992.

<sup>4</sup>Works by Cremilda Lima include: *O tambarino dourado*, *Missanga e o sapupo*, *O nguiko e as mandiocas*, *A kianda e o barquinho de fuxi*, *A múcua que bailocava ao vento*, *O maboque mágico*, *A velha sanga partida*, *Mussulo uma ilha uma encantada* and *O balão vermelho*.

<sup>5</sup>Maria Celestina Fernandes in "The Emergence and Formation of Angolan Post-Independence Children's Literature", a lecture given in Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, July 2008.

<sup>6</sup>"Ynari" was published in Angola by "Chá de Caxinde", and later by "Editorial Nzila". In Portugal it is available in Caminho (2004).

<sup>7</sup>*Estigas* is a game, an oral dispute, principally among children, with the purpose of (scornfully or maliciously) offending the counterpart (author's definition).



# Books on Books

*Here are critiques on books about the child/adult stance in children's literature in France, on capturing "memorial culture" and the history of children's literature in Germany, on the relationship of painting and illustration to Russian folklore and history, on the 100 years of New Zealand School Journal, and on the scholarly study of fairy tales, myths, and legends from Spain.*

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## FRANCE

ISABELLE CANI [ET AL] (EDS)

*Devenir adulte et rester enfant? Relire les productions pour la jeunesse*[Becoming an adult while staying a child?  
Rereading children's literature]Actes du colloque international de Clermont-  
Ferrand 18, 19, 20 mai 2006 / Centre de  
Recherches sur les Littératures Modernes et  
Contemporaines

(Series: Littératures)

Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Univ. Blaise Pascal 2008 493pp

ISBN 9782845163447 €35



The German author Erich Kästner contended that only those who stay a child at heart while becoming an adult are truly human. And indeed, a large part of literature for children and young adults oscillates between these seemingly dualistic poles. This fact motivated the Centre de Recherches

sur les Littératures Modernes et Contemporaines in Clermont-Ferrand/France to organise an international conference in 2006 to explore the apparent paradox of growing up while remaining a child. The volume presents the results of this conference. Thirty-six scholars analyse children's literature from different angles, including reception theory, such as Claudie de la Génardière in *Grandir avec les histoires* (Growing Up with Stories) and Mugař Constantinescu's *Contes d'enfants pour adults* (Children's Tales for Adults), or close readings, such as Monique Chassagnol's and Nathalie Prince's contributions on *Peter Pan*. The corpus – ranging from Fénelon's *Télémaque*, and *Alice in Wonderland*, *Pinocchio*, *Le petit prince* and

picture books without words to *Harry Potter* – is as broad as the spectrum of involved disciplines, including History, Literature, Linguistics and Translation Theory, represented by Roberta Pederzoli's contribution. Psychoanalytic theory is called upon in Geneviève Djenatis's critical contribution about the effects on children of stimulus satiation by media (often including scenes of violence), which, according to the author, transform children into "miniature adults" ("adultes en miniature") and threaten to overwhelm them. The rich and thought-provoking proceedings are framed by an introduction from the editor, Isabelle Cani, and concluding remarks by the French specialist on children's literature, Jean Perrot.

Elena Kilian

## GERMANY

GABRIELE VON GLASENAPP AND HANS  
HEINO EWERS (EDS)*Kriegs- und Nachkriegskindheiten. Studien zur literarischen Erinnerungskultur für junge Leser*[War and postwar childhoods. Studies on the literary memorial culture for young readers]  
(Series: Kinder- und Jugendkultur, -literatur und -medien; 57)

Frankfurt am Main [et al]: Lang 2008 519pp ISBN

9783631574560 €69



The rupture of civilisation caused by World War II and its devastating effects on individuals, families, various social groups, and different nations have played an important role in literature dedicated to working

through the past for several decades now. Scholars from Europe, Asia, and the United States came together at an international conference in 2005 to determine the place of literature for children and young adults within this memorial culture. This volume unites their contributions as well as a few commissioned articles and proposes a sort of topography of children's books working through one of the most difficult chapters of contemporary history. Divided into six sections by countries, the essays present the different national, medial, socio-political, and literary contexts.

As widely as the national perspectives on this time may vary, all works for children and young adults on the topic share the same dilemma: What should children be exposed to? How much violence and reality are pedagogically viable? Many works betray the challenge of constructing a story that is both sensitive and complex, that does not resort to myths of resistance or political innocence and that does not over-simplify history. The literary works thus often reflect societies' struggles to negotiate their relationships to this past.

It would probably have been sufficient to limit the volume to the period of World War II, especially since the postwar period is only addressed in very few articles. In any case, the highly commendable conference proceedings certainly make the case that the topic has much potential. Apart from informing the reader about the various national ways of working through the past, the volume leaves us with one important insight: To this day, we are grappling with the problem of how to transmit the events of this time period to young and adolescent readers.

*Christiane Raabe*

## GERMANY

REINER WILD (ED)

### *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*

[History of German children's literature]

3., vollständig überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage

(3rd, fully revised and augmented edition)

Stuttgart: Metzler 2008 533pp ISBN 9783476019806

€39.95



This third edition of the *History of German Children's Literature*, originally published in 1990 and first revised in 2002, offers a survey of German-language literature for children and young adults from its beginnings to the present. It approaches the subject using the

well-proven tools of literary analysis and social and cultural history. But this revised edition differentiates more carefully, adds nuances, shifts emphasis, and adds valuable information. The reworked chapters, such as the one on literature produced in exile or the one on fascist children's literature, go into more detail. There are also new additions, like the chapter on Jewish children's literature. All of this allows for better contextualisation; works are no longer presented in isolation, but are firmly placed within the larger framework of historical, literary, and social developments (e.g. the chapter *From the Last Third of the Nineteenth Century to World War I*). The third edition places special emphasis on the twentieth century. It revises long-held, but obsolete judgments on the literary production of the 1950s, for example, and pays greater attention to recent and

current trends. The more traditional division of the twentieth century into decades is abandoned in favour of systematic categories, such as content (*Literature on History*), genre, or target audience (*Literature for Girls*). The important final chapter *Media and Multimedia* contextualises children's literature within the contemporary multi-media environment. Thanks to this revised edition, the *History of German Children's Literature* remains an indispensable reference tool, which takes into account the most recent developments not only of literary production, but also of scholarship.

Ines Galling

## NETHERLANDS

PATTY WAGEMAN [ET AL] (EDS)

*Russian legends, folk tales and fairy tales* [on the occasion of the Exhibition "Russian Legends, Folk Tales and Fairy Tales" at the Groninger Museum, Groningen, the Netherlands, held from 15 December 2007 to 6 April 2008]

Rotterdam: NAI Publ. 2007 215pp ISBN 9789056626082 €35  
(Dutch edition available)



The Groninger Museum in the Netherlands has been showing a series of seminal exhibitions on Russian art of the nineteenth and early twentieth century since 2001. The exhibition *Russian Legends*, which was

accompanied by this richly illustrated catalogue, featured book illustrations and paintings by the renowned artists Victor Vasnetsov, Ivan Bilibin, Nicholas Roerich, Mikhail Vrubel, and Wassily Kandinsky.

Russian artists' interest in folk art was triggered

by the documentation and publication of Russian folk tales by Alexander N. Afanasiev and, even earlier, by the fairy tales adapted into verse and illustrated by Alexander Pushkin. Fairy tales and legends thus became popular subjects for painters and illustrators, who developed a very specific style in their attempt to capture the spirit of these tales by using folkloristic techniques.

Bilibin's art nouveau illustrations, for example, focus on individual scenes. But Bilibin was not only responsible for the illustrations, he designed his fairy-tale books from cover to cover. Wassily Kandinsky experimented with different perspectives, styles, and techniques to shed new light on familiar scenes in fairy tales. He thus created expressionistic scenes inspired by folklore in vibrant colours, woodcut prints in colour or black and white, figurative paintings reminiscent of the cover image of *Der Blaue Reiter* [The Blue Rider] as well as abstract images evoking fantastic scenes and scenery.

The large-format catalogue offers high-quality reproductions. Detailed texts written by experts in the field give ample information, not only on the artists and their work, but also on the relationship of painting and illustration to Russian folklore and history.

Werner Küffner

## NEW ZEALAND

GREGORY O'BRIEN

*A nest of singing birds; 100 years of the New Zealand School Journal*

Wellington, N.Z.: Learning Media 2007 160pp

ISBN 9780790326276 (soft cover edition) NZD 39.95



Since the publication of its first issues in 1907, the *New Zealand School Journal* – which, to this day, is distributed free of charge by the Ministry of Education to New Zealand school children between the age of seven and thirteen – has provided generations of Kiwi youth with “New Zealand-based reading material, relevant to their lives.”

This large-format, square work, put together to celebrate the centenary of this outstanding journal, traces the historical development of the journal from its beginnings to the present day. In addition to some background facts on life in New Zealand in general, acclaimed author Gregory O'Brien offers an abundance of information about the development of the journal and its changes throughout the years. This survey allows him to introduce some of the country's most renowned authors and illustrators, such as Janet Frame, Margaret Mahy, Joy Cowley, Witi Ihimaera, Russell Clarke, Jill McDonald, and Bob Kerr, who worked for or contributed to the journal and thus assured its popularity. The informative text is complemented by many textual and visual examples (cover illustrations and drawings for stories and poems, excerpts from short tales, etc.). Thus, the book not only gives a comprehensive overview of the journal itself, it does not omit criticism about some negative aspects, such as the pejorative representation of Maori culture and

people in the early days of the journal. It can also be regarded as a compendium of one century of children's book writing and illustration in New Zealand and will prove an essential secondary source for both children's literature academics and interested lay readers.

*Claudia Söffner*

## SPAIN

ELOY MARTOS NÚÑEZ

*Cuentos y leyendas tradicionales* (Teoría, textos y didáctica)

[Traditional Fairy Tales, Myths and Legends. (Theory, Texts, and Didactics)]

(Series: Arcadia; 15)

Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha 2007 294pp

ISBN 9788484275145 €17



The Centro de Estudios de Promoción de la Lectura y Literatura Infantil (CEPLI) at the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha (Spain) is one of the most distinguished centres for research in children's literature in the Spanish-speaking world. One of its special

areas of interest are traditional, originally orally transmitted literary forms, such as fairy tales, songs or rhymes for children. This orientation is reflected in the titles of the series *Arcadia* published by the university. The title under review is part of this series; it analyses fairy tales, myths, and legends with the aim of determining the characteristics of these genres by describing their commonalities and

differences. While the first part of the book focuses on questions of literary theory and analysis, the second part explores ways in which fairy tales, myths, and legends can be used in classroom settings.

The author, a professor of literature at the Universidad de Extremadura, relates the most relevant results of national and international scholarship and complements these findings with many examples taken mainly from the rich oral tradition of the Iberian Peninsula. Including contemporary forms, some of which have migrated to the modern media, such as urban legends, he shows that there is a strong overlap in motifs between the two traditional literary forms, but that these motifs take shape in different generic

contexts. While fairy tales tend to be strongly fictional and formulaic and set the plot within very vague spatio-temporal coordinates, myths and legends are more firmly grounded in time and space, allude to real events, and state examples. Less bound by structural constraints, they can adapt more easily to new geographic or historical contexts.

Due to its very compact form, the book is not an easy read. An index and a more extensive bibliography would also have been useful. Overall, however, the monograph offers a thorough summary of the most important insights of the scholarly study of fairy tales, myths, and legends.

*Jochen Weber*

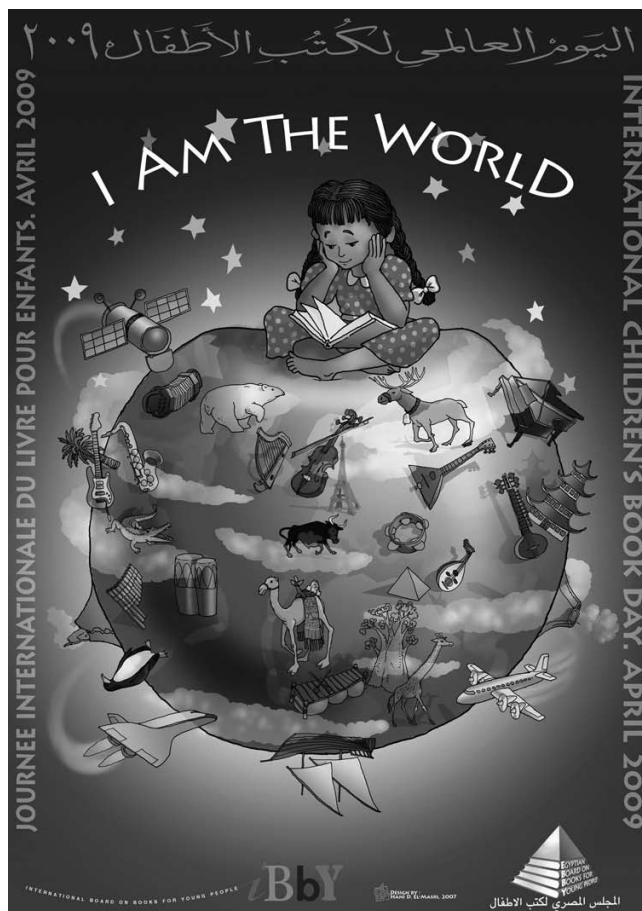
*Thirteen-year-old Rits (actually Maurits) is cast as the victim in this example of a sub-genre of children's fiction that features irresponsible or selfish parents. But Rits is a plucky, resourceful young person who manages his own life with more maturity than the adults related to him. His father is traveling indefinitely with his new girlfriend while his devastated mother has entered an institution. Dumped with his couch-potato uncle whose bad habits are legion, Rits turns to writing in his journal to work through his plight. Strangely, Rits is less to be pitied than admired, demonstrating insight and industry. He even manages to bring much-needed structure into his uncle's life. Speaking convincingly in the voice of a teen boy is a rare feat, but Jongman manages it. The novel does not depend on action and adventure but on Rits' voice; like his creator, he has a good ear for dialogue and a fine sense for tone in narration. The result is a book that is both touching and funny.*

*Glenna Sloan*



Mariken Jongman  
trans Wanda Boeke  
**Rits**

Rotterdam, The Netherlands:  
Lemniscaat, 2005.  
First US edition: Asheville, NC: Front  
Street/Boyd's Mills Press, 2008  
236 pp. ISBN 9781590785454  
(fiction, 12+)



*Recent IBBY activities include promoting the latest celebration of International Children's Book Day and sponsoring IBBY Yamada programs for 2009 in South Africa, Guinea, Indonesia, and Zimbabwe. Nine previous IBBY Yamada projects took place in Bolivia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Malaysia, Nepal and South Africa. The IBBY-Yamada Scholarship Programme continues with professional exchanges occurring between Germany and the Czech Republic and between Venezuela and Spain. IBBY workshops on bookmaking, illustration, story collecting, and reading promotion were held in Bolivia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Malaysia, Nepal, and South Africa. Mark your calendars now for the 32nd IBBY Congress in Santiago de Compostela in 2010.*

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# Focus IBBY

Compiled and edited by  
ELIZABETH PAGE



Elizabeth Page is IBBY's member services, communications and new projects director

### International Children's Book Day 2009

This year's 2009 message and poster for International Children's Book Day are sponsored by IBBY Egypt. The motto "I am the World" is featured on the colourful poster designed by Hani D. El-Masri and is the title of the poem submitted by EBBY – Egyptian IBBY. Copies of the poster and flyer are available from IBBY Egypt, c/o Integrated Care Society, 42 Abdullah Diraz Street, El Golf Area, P.O. Box 11341, Heliopolis – Cairo, nkholly@aucegypt.edu

*I am the world, and the world is me  
For through my book I can be whatever I want to be.  
Words and pictures, verse and prose  
Take me to places both far and close.*

*In the land of Sultans and gold  
A thousand stories unfold  
Flying carpets, magic lamps  
Genies, ghouls and Sindbads  
Tell their secrets to Shehrezad.*

*With every word on every page  
I travel through time and space.  
And on the wings of fantasy  
My spirit crosses land and sea.*

*The more I read, the more I know  
That with my book  
I'll always be  
In the best of company.*

### IBBY-Yamada Projects 2009

The National Sections of IBBY are invited to submit projects and workshop proposals to the IBBY-Yamada Programme each year. The projects that the Executive Committee looks for are ones that are well thought out, manageable, and fall within IBBY's prime areas of concern. Each proposal is judged on its merits with emphasis on

the development of a book culture where at present there is none or it is limited.

As IBBY's funding is limited, the available grants are seen as seed money allowing co-financing by other agencies. The proposing National Section is responsible for the development and administration of the project on the ground, while the IBBY Secretariat follows the progress and ensures that the organizers receive any support needed.

The four project categories cover the following areas:

a) Books where there are no books; b) introductory workshops on publishing, writing, illustration, using books in schools, and creating a library; c) advanced workshops on publishing, writing, illustration, using books in schools, creating libraries, bibliotherapy, and mentoring; d) policy workshops.

The following workshops were accepted by the Executive Committee for 2009:

**South Africa:** *Unknown 2 Known: Children's Bookmaking Project.* This is a continuation of the very successful project that has been running for the past two years in the Vukani Primary School, Lower Crossroads, Cape Town. The principal of the school credits the project with increasing literacy rates amongst the pupils. This positive impact has been recognized by the City of Cape Town in the form of funding to extend the project to other area schools. This project is a fine example of what IBBY is trying to achieve: the development of a reading culture! This project was proposed by IBBY Canada and is administered by EMEP.

**Guinea:** Training workshop for illustrators of children's books. This workshop was proposed by IBBY France and will be administered by the Club des Amis du Livre based in the capital Conakry. The aim of the workshop is to train local artists in the fundamental aspects of children's book

illustration and design. Children's books in Guinea have a very short history and it was only 15 years ago that the first Guinean publishing house was established. Before then all books were imported from France and contained nothing about the children's own country or culture. The organization has run a series of workshops for writers and illustrators and has increased the number of local children's books available to 11. In 2008 a writing workshop produced eight new texts that will be prepared for illustration at the IBBY workshop.

**Indonesia:** *Children's Picture Book Illustration.* This will be a basic introductory workshop to show how to improve the quality of illustration by local artists and illustrators. The emphasis will be on Indonesian culture and heritage through the many folk tales, myths and legends of the country. The partners in the workshop are the Ministry of Education and local organizations concerned with children's books. With the Ministry as a partner, the workshop organizers hope to raise the government's awareness of the importance of publishing good quality books for children. The workshop will take place at the University of Maranatha Bandung in the centre of Java and will be run by IBBY Indonesia – INABBY.

**Zimbabwe:** IBBY Zimbabwe will run a workshop in Bulawayo to train teachers and librarians in the promotion of a reading culture through the use of storytelling. Zimbabwe used to have the best education system in Africa but has been going through a very long period of destruction and neglect, as well as recent war and widespread sickness. There is a severe shortage of public and school libraries making it impossible for children to have any access to books. This workshop will train teachers and librarians on how to address this major problem. The Ministry of Education is one of IBBY Zimbabwe's partners and this will, in turn, push the local governments to act. The storytelling activities will be aimed at encouraging the communities to work together towards developing a reading culture and a love of reading.

An important innovation of the IBBY-Yamada Programme is the development of the IBBY-Yamada Scholarship Programme. In 2008, IBBY Germany invited a colleague from the Czech Republic to take part in their annual conference and organized a tour of events around Germany. This idea has been developed into the scholarship programme, whereby the successful candidate will attend a formal course or other type of training event which, in IBBY's view, is recognised as being of top quality and valuable to the field of children's literature. The candidates selected are outstanding and already established professionals. They must be

*An important innovation of the IBBY-Yamada Programme is the development of the IBBY-Yamada Scholarship Programme.*



able to demonstrate that the knowledge they will take back with them will be used to improve the stature and practice of children's literature in their country. The 2009 IBBY-Yamada Scholarship is going to Luis Freites (Venezuela), who was proposed by IBBY Venezuela. He will join the online MA course on Books and Literature for Children and Youngsters run jointly by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Spain, Banco del Libro in Venezuela, the Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez and the Fundación SM (both in Spain). This MA course is aimed at promoting cultural interchange between Spanish-speaking countries. Although it is an online course, students may choose to attend face-to-face classes in Caracas or Barcelona.



### IBBY - Yamada Projects 2008

It is also gratifying to report that nine IBBY Yamada projects were successfully completed by the end of 2008. These took place in Bolivia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Malaysia, Nepal and South Africa. A professional exchange visit also took place between Germany and the Czech Republic. More details and reports about these projects can be found on the IBBY website in the activities section under projects, workshops and seminars.

Bolivian IBBY worked with local people to collect stories from the Quechua people in the town of Colcapirua, not far from Cochabamba. The workshop made cloth books, which were then turned into colourful printed books in Spanish and Quechua and distributed in the community.

In November, a two-day workshop on publishing in Ghana was held in Accra. One important aspect was how to meet export standards so that African publishers could compete better in the international market. The illustrator Niki Daly from South Africa shared fascinating insights into the art of illustration and two local librarians presented a session on what the children actually liked to read! The workshop was organized by the Osu Children's Library Fund ([www.osuchildrenslibraryfund.ca](http://www.osuchildrenslibraryfund.ca)) and the Ghana Book Publishers Association.

In Guatemala, the IBBY section ran three one-day workshops to promote reading. This series was aimed at preparing professionals, not just teachers,

with new theories and practical knowledge to promote reading. In this way, they will be able to manage new future projects. The workshops were successful and were well attended.

Most children in Haiti do not have access to books except for a few textbooks. Although about 50% of children attend school, three-quarters of the schools are private, putting an enormous burden on families. There are no school libraries and the children are mainly taught in French. With no community libraries, except in two or three big cities, most of the children are not really exposed to books, especially those written in their native language of Haitian Creole. The major themes of the project were: the importance of reading among young children, our role as adults in selecting and distributing books to youngsters, storytelling and other techniques for making reading enjoyable and beneficial for children's development, and making books in a way that is especially suited to underdeveloped areas.



AWIC/IBBY India used its considerable experience to set up two further children's libraries. The 2008 project established children's libraries in Jaipur and in the port town of Daman in Gujarat. Neither children nor adults in either of these communities have had access to books. The National Bal Bawan cooperated with AWIC and will help in the running of the libraries.

In Malaysia, the IBBY-Yamada Fund supported a conference comprising three main activities: a conference, a workshop, and an exhibition. Invited speakers from IBBY, other organizations, and the Asian-Pacific countries presented papers and a sideline workshop on successful writing, illustration, and promotion of children's books also took place. Participants included publishers, writers, illustrators, librarians, educators, policy-makers and parents.

IBBY Nepal organized a very successful project that has established two mobile libraries that will serve 12 libraries in community-based schools in remote areas of Nepal. Part of the project was aimed at encouraging parents



and teachers, as well as the children to participate in the accompanying reading programme. The teachers, parents, and students of the villages were instructed in the various aspects of reading promotion and management of the mobile library. The long-term benefit is that the teachers, students and parents will now be able to run reading programmes and the mobile libraries themselves.

The project *Unknown 2 Known* in Cape Town, supported by IBBY Canada, is a continuation of the 2007 project. Children are encouraged to write stories of everyday life (the *Known*) and to collect stories from their parents, grandparents, and neighbours: family anecdotes, folktales and legends (the *Unknown*). Due to the levels of poverty in the local community, a meal and juice is a must for each child at every session. This programme is creating a fruitful space for real human and social development, thereby enhancing the children's lives, bringing healing, building leaderships skills in the local volunteers, and fostering a sense of community volunteerism. This project is continuing into 2009 and is making a

big impact on the community.

The exchange between IBBY Germany and Czech IBBY took place in May. The *Arbeitskreis für Jugendliteratur* selected Jana Čenková from Prague to attend various seminars and workshops during a study trip that included travel throughout Germany. This type of exchange of knowledge and expertise is vital in strengthening the IBBY network.

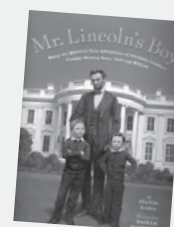
### 32nd IBBY Congress: Santiago de Compostela 2010

The 32nd IBBY Congress will be held in Santiago de Compostela, Spain from 8 to 12 September 2010. The theme of the congress is **The Strength of Minorities** and focuses on children's and young people's literature from minority languages, cultures, and situations. The call for papers will be issued in mid-2009. Further information is available at the website: [www.ibbycompostela2010.org](http://www.ibbycompostela2010.org) or on the IBBY website [www.ibby.org](http://www.ibby.org).



The book's subtitle, "Being the MOSTLY True Adventures of Abraham Lincoln's Trouble-Making Sons, TAD and WILLIE" is sure to have particular appeal for younger readers when they are introduced to the many fine children's books written to commemorate the two hundredth birthday of America's legendary president. Staton helps children relate to the great leader by providing glimpses of his unfailingly kind and concerned relationship with his two young sons, even during the President's preoccupation with the Civil War. Willie and Tad's mischievous pranks caused consternation among the staff of the White House, but never with their indulgent father. Readers see the President writing out a pardon at the boys' request for their soldier doll and learn from accessible author's notes that this event actually occurred. A selected bibliography and other resources for learning more are included. Ibatoulline's remarkable paintings provide accurate visual information about people and places, while they also manage to convey the emotions of the major and minor characters.

Glenna Sloan



Staton Rabin  
illus Bagram Ibatoulline  
*Mr. Lincoln's Boys*

New York:  
Viking/Penguin Young Readers Group 2008  
40 pp ISBN 9780670061603  
(picture book, historical fiction, 4-10)

Michael Yasnov has given a remarkably explicit title, *Children's Time*, to his new book of poems. We all know that children have their own relations with Time. A day and a whole life of a child are full of events: joyful, mysterious, frightening. Children's time can extend, shrink or just play out as children themselves play. The author is a well-known expert in quibble. He makes out of words constructions never before imaginable; even if they had existed previously, they would not be so beautiful. It seems sometimes that his witticism has an ancient history, it is so natural. The well-designed book is aimed at children of pre-school and lower-school age. The illustrations of Yulia Bogatova are simple at first sight but due to their form, complicated color and combinations of different techniques and textures, they create a manifold space for the whole book where all the poems feel at home. Children love this book, parents and critics praise it. The book, awarded the honor, "A Book of the Year," at the International Moscow Book Fair, was acclaimed as the best book for children published in Russia in 2007.

Angela Lebedeva



Michael Yasnov  
illus Yulia Bogatova  
*Children's Time: Poems*

Saint-Petersburg: Russia, 2007.  
128 p. ISBN 9785845203823  
(poetry, 4-7)

*Long ago, it was said that the giraffe had a short neck. Too lazy to gather her own food, Rafrafafa, the giraffe, begs food from the other forest animals. Finally, the other animals refuse to supply her with food. Very hungry, Rafrafafa visits the monkeys who are away from home. Through the window she sees fruit on the table. She sticks her head through the window, but cannot reach the fruit and her head becomes stuck fast. When the monkeys see her predicament, they grab her tail and start pulling. When her head is finally freed, all are surprised to see that Rafrafafa's neck has stretched to many times its original length. She pretends not to care and steps gracefully away. But her shape is forever changed together with her lifestyle. From that time, she found her own food. Illustrations for *The Lazy Giraffe* are a fine supplement to the engaging text. Clear, colorful and simple, they capture the humor of this fine retelling of a pour quoi tale. Facial expressions reveal the animals' emotions in ways that make it easy for young readers to identify with the characters.*

Julinda Abu Nasr



الزرافة الكسولة  
*The Lazy Giraffe*

Nuha Tabborah Hammound  
illus Bilal Basal

Beirut, Lebanon: Asala 2007  
34pp ISBN 978458677  
(picture book, 8-10)

# Submission Guidelines for *Bookbird*

*Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* is the referred journal of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

Papers on any topic related to children's literature and of interest to an international audience will be considered for publication. Contributions are invited not only from scholars and critics but also from editors, translators, publishers, librarians, classroom educators and children's book authors and illustrators or anyone working in the field of children's literature. Please try to supply illustrations for your article. (Book covers are sufficient, but other illustrations are also welcome.)

**Length:** Up to 3000 words

**Language:** Articles are published in English, but where authors have no translation facilities, we can accept contributions in most major European languages. Please contact us first if you have a translation question.

**Format:** Word for Windows (Mac users please save your document in rich text format — RTF) as an email attachment; send illustrations as JPG attachments.

**Style and layout:** The author's name and details should appear in the email only, not in the paper itself. A stylesheet is available with more detailed guidelines.

**Deadline:** *Bookbird* is published every quarter, in January, April, July, October. Papers may be submitted at any time, but it is unlikely that your paper, if accepted for publication, would be published for at least six to nine months from the date of submission, to allow time for refereeing and the production process.

**Contact details:** Please send two copies to: kurkjianc@comcast.net; kurkjianc@gmail.com and swardell@twu.edu

**NB:** Please put *Bookbird* submission followed by your initials in the subject line.

*Please remember to include your full name and contact details (including postal address), together with your professional affiliation and/or a few lines describing your area of work in the body of your email.*



## Send us a book postcard from your part of the world!

Notices on international children's books, appearing throughout *Bookbird*, are compiled from sources around the world by Glenna Sloan, who teaches children's literature at Queens College City University of New York.

Have you got a favorite recently published children's book — a picturebook, story collection, novel or information book — that you think should be known outside its own country? If you know of a book from your own or another country that you feel should be introduced to the IBBY community, please send a short account of it to us at *Bookbird*, and we may publish it.

Send copy (about 150 words), together with full publication details (use 'postcard' reviews in this issue of *Bookbird* as a model) and a scan of the cover image (in JPG format), to Professor Glenna Sloan (glennasloan@hotmail.com).

We are very happy to receive reviews from non-English-speaking countries ~ but remember to include an English translation of the title as well as the original title (in transliterated form, where applicable).

# Books

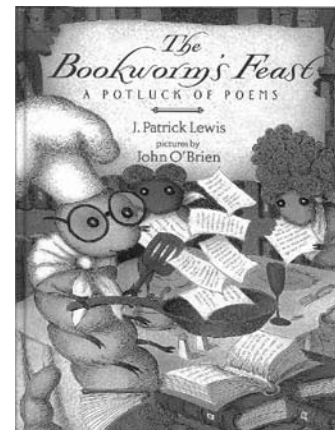
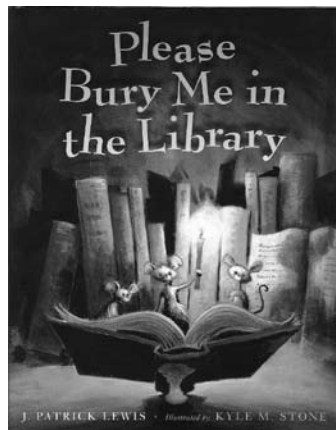


Books are thieves of hours.  
They kidnap the mind;  
The body is left behind.  
But books are always  
Caught read-handed  
And released  
After serving many  
Arresting sentences.

by J. PATRICK LEWIS



J. Patrick Lewis is an author and poet from Westerville, Ohio (USA). He has written several collections of poetry focusing on books, libraries, and reading, including *Please Bury Me In The Library* (Harcourt, 2005) and *The Bookworm's Feast: A Potluck of Poems* (Dial, 1999).  
<http://www.jpatricklewis.com>



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