

## Children's Books in Central Europe

The present issue of *IBBYLink* marks the beginning of an occasional series devoted to children's literature in Europe, a subject about which English speakers are notoriously ignorant. We are focusing here on central Europe, defined in a relatively flexible way as broadly the area between what is always regarded as Western Europe on the one side and Russia on the other. Much of our attention here is devoted to literature for young people in Poland, and we are grateful to Polish IBBY for supplying a good deal of material, both in terms of the article by Grzegorz Leszczyński and of an actual copy of their *Almanac* filled with information about contemporary Polish illustrators. It is impressive to learn about the activities of Polish IBBY, including competitions for the 'Book of the Year', especially since so much of what they produce is bilingual in Polish and English. We are also grateful for an article by Maria Ostasz on a longer period of Polish writing for children and for Darja Mazi-Leskovar's account of Slovenian children's literature. We are aware that many countries are unrepresented here, except perhaps in the reviews, in the material from Pam Robson's database and in a personal memoir about Hungary. I hope that the absence of so many other central European countries will inspire those who know something about them to send material for a future issue.

There is perhaps only one excuse for the reluctance of English-speaking readers to engage with literature in other European languages – the difficulty of deciding which language to choose, in the absence of a single candidate comparable on a world scale to, for instance, Arabic, Chinese or, of course, English itself. The logical choice would probably be Spanish, but relatively few British enthusiasts for children's literature would be able to claim expertise in reading that language. We may sigh about the sparsity of books available

in English translations, while publishers tend to complain that those they do produce generally don't sell. Clearly there is a case for better information all round, in the hope of inspiring more potential customers with a zest to read literature in translation. The situation may well be improving, especially with the impetus given by the biennial Marsh Award – but the preponderance of books shortlisted is likely to be from the Latin or Germanic languages, at least until we have more translators capable of doing justice to books in the languages of central and eastern Europe. I hope that our current venture could be just a little instrumental in helping this process!

Pat Pinsent

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## The Development of the Contemporary Polish Youth Novel

Maria Ostasz

This overview of Polish literary writing addressed to the young over the last five decades falls into two periods: the years 1956 to 1980, and from 1980 onwards. The October 1956 political breakthrough triggered a number of positive processes under which literature started to free itself of socialist indoctrination. This brief overview has a chronological framework and also relates to genre. In it I outline important novel types and sketch the conditions in which they developed.

The historical novel of the second half of the twentieth century, written for the young, was gradually divesting itself of the political newspeak of the early 1950s. Two books by Karol Bunsch *O Zawiszy Czarnym opowieść* [The story of Zawisza Czarny] (1958) and *Przełom* [The breakthrough] (1964) stand out for their resolute plots, psychological insight in the creation of characters, and the slightly archaic language which is used to describe historical events and heroes. Historical knowledge is also popularised by Ewa Nowacka's *Szubad żąda ofiary* [Szubad asks for sacrifice] (1969) and Bolesław Mrówczyński's *W poszukiwaniu tajemniczego Bajongu* [Searching for mysterious Bajong] (1955), *Człowiek bez nazwiska* [A man without a name] (1958), *Błękitny trop* [The blue trace] (1961) and *Droga wśród skał* [The road among the rocks] (1963). In a series of books devoted to great Poles, Mrówczyński portrays travellers (Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński), great patriots (Józef Bem), explorers, exiles and researchers (Jan Czerski, Ernest Malinowski), showing their brave deeds that made Poland known in the world.

The 1960s witnessed the development of the moral novel, especially that of psychological character, addressed to young girls. Readers could identify their own physical and psychological problems about growing up: conflicts in the family, first love, friendship and attraction. These novels include Irena Jurgielewiczowa's *Ten obcy* [The stranger] (1961), *Niespokojne godziny* [Anxious hours] (1964) and *Wszystko inaczej* [All is different] (1968); Krystyna Siesicka's *Zapałka na zakręcie* [A match on the curve] (1966), *Jeziro osobliwości* [The lake of curiosities] (1966), *Beethoven i dżinsy* [Beethoven and the jeans] (1968) and *Fotoplastykon* [Peep show] (1969); Janusz Domagalik's *Męska sprawa* [Men's thing] (1963), *Koniec wakacji* [Holiday ends] (1966) and *Księżniczka i chłopcy* [Princess and the boys] (1967); and Janina Wiczorkowska-Zabłocka's *Wolne obroty* [Slow motion] (1968). The artistic value of these works was already appreciated at the time, with Jurgielewiczowa's *The Stranger* and Domagalik's *Holiday Ends* being put on the IBBY Honour List in 1964 and 1974 respectively.

The next decades produced realistic stories reflecting the vicissitudes of young life: Siesicka's novels *Katarzyna* [Catherine] (1972) and *Łukasz* [Luke] (1972), Jurgielewiczowa's *Inna* [Odd one out] (1975) and *Ważne i nieważne* [The crucial and the trivial] (1971), and Domagalik's *Marek* [Mark] (1971) and *Irmina* (1974). These authors focus on psychological reasons behind the protagonist's actions and behaviour, limiting the social milieu to the school and the family environments. Very popular among young female readers at the time were Maria Krüger's *Karolcia* [Caroline] (1959), Hanna Ożogowska's *Dziewczyna i chłopak, czyli heca na czternaście fajerek* [A boy and a girl or a fine kettle of fish] (1960) and Anna Kamińska's *Rozalka Olaboga* [Alas Rosie] (1960). The protagonists of these novels do not live through any great conflicts but experience the joy of being together among their peers, family and friends.

The turn of the 1960s also witnessed a growth in popularity of adventure and adventure-travel books. In the former category are works by Alina and Czesław Centkiewicz, who used a range of different genres including narrated biography: *Fridtjof, co z ciebie wyrośnie* [Fridtjof, what will become of you?] (1962), *Na podbój Arktyki* [Heading to the Arctic] (1952), *Znowu na wyspie Niedźwiedziej* [Back to the bear's island] (1954); and travel books: *Tumbo z Przylądka Dobrej Nadziei* [Tumbo at the Cape of Good Hope] (1964).

Very popular among boy readers was a series of adventure-travel novels written by Alfred Szklarski and featuring Tomek Wilkowski: *Tomek w krainie kangurów* [Tomek in kangaroo land] (1957), *Przygody Tomka na Czarnym Łądzie* [Tomek on Black Land]

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(1958), *Tomek na wojennej ścieżce* [Tomek on the warpath] (1959). In all the nine parts, the main protagonist's adventures provide space for a detailed description of exotic geography and culture – the young boy turns out not only to be morally respectable but also extremely knowledgeable and brave. The atmosphere of a great adventure is also found in Arkady Fiedler's books: *Nowa przygoda i Mały Bizon* (1952) [New adventure and a small buffalo], *Gwinea* [Guinea] (1962) and *Madagaskar, okrutny czarodziej* [Madagascar, the savage wizard] (1969).

Mastery in writing sensational adventure novels was achieved by Edmund Niziurski in his *Księga urwisów* [The book of brats] (1954), *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa* [The unbelievable adventures of Mark, the Freckled Face] (1959) and *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* [The way with Alcybiades] (1964). Adam Bahdaj wrote *Wakacje z duchami* [Holidays with the ghosts] (1962), *Uwaga! Czarny parasol* [Look out! Black umbrella] (1963) and *Kapelusz za sto tysięcy* [A hat worth a hundred thousand] (1966).

Zbigniew Nienacki, best known for his nineteen-part series about Mr Clevercar [Pan Samochodzik], wrote *Skarb Atanaryku* [The treasure of the Atanaryk] (1960), *Wyspa złoczyńców* [The devilmen's island] (1964), *Pan Samochodzik i Templariusze* [Mr Clevercar and the Templar Knights] (1966), *Księga strachu* [The book of fear] (1967) and others. In all these books the reader follows the protagonists tracking down spies, political opponents, and thieves stealing and smuggling invaluable pieces of art. The crime story plot is turned into an adventure novel to serve both entertainment and moral teaching purposes. Novelty is also introduced in Jerzy Broszkiewicz's *Wielka, większa i największa* [Big, bigger, the biggest] (1960).

The period after 1980 witnessed big changes in Poland's reality, reflected in numerous novels by Siesicka: *Chwileczkę Walerio* [Wait a minute Waleria] (1993), a trilogy on three generations of women, *Falbanki* [The frills] (1994), *Woalki* [The veils] (1995) and *Wachlarze* [The fans] (1995), and *Dziewczyna Mistrza Gry* [The girl of the role-playing-games champion] (1997). These were insightful studies of teenage problems sketched against a broad social background. The last of these titles shows the fatal influence of fantasy games on the young psyche. An interesting formal device is used by Siesicka in her *Piosenka koguta* [Cock's song], where the protagonist–narrator attempts a reflection on time, the passing of things, freedom and the inner limitations of the human being.

In the 1990s, reality fiction for the young was also created by female writers of the younger generation. Worth mentioning are Marta Fox and her novels *Batoniki* Always miękkie jak deszczówka [Always chocolate bars, soft as rainwater] (1994), *Agaton – Gagaton: jak pięknie być sobą* [Agaton – Gagaton: It's fun to stay oneself] (1994), *Magda.doc* (1996), *Paulina.doc* (1997), and a series *Pierwsza Miłość: Zanim nadejdzie rozstanie* [First love: Before the parting comes] (1999) and *Do rana daleko* [It's still time before the morning comes] (1999). The same type of writing is practised by Ewa Przybylska: *Dzieci z blokowiska* [Kids around the block] (1993), *Dotyk motyla* [Butterfly touch] (1994), *Ptasi instynkt* [Bird's instinct] (1995) and *Dzień kolibra* [The day of the humming bird] (1997); Ewa Nowacka: *Wielkie kochanie, mała miłość* [Great loving, little love] (1998); Beata Ostrowiecka: *Zła dziewczyna* [The bad girl] (2005); and Anna Onichimowska: *Żegnaj na zawsze* [Good bye for ever] (1998). Each of these books shows a painful modern experience: unwanted pregnancy (*Magda.doc* and *Great Loving, Little Love*) or aggression by gangs (*The Day of the Humming Bird* and *Kids around the Block*). Breaking the taboos in novels for the young, first started by Tomek Tryzna in 1994 with his *Panna Nikt* [Miss Nobody], has occurred as a result of different artistic genres. Małgorzata Musierowicz's *Jeźycjada* series, whose first part *Szósta klepka* [The sixth sense] was written in 1978, has developed into an interesting literary phenomenon, popular with the young and often becoming a text for readers of all generations. Recently the sixteenth part, *Żaba* [The frog] (2005) and the seventeenth, *Czarna polewka* [Rejected proposal] (2006) were published. In *Jeźycjada*, Musierowicz draws insightful portraits of both young and adult members of the Borejko family from Jeżyce, a sector of Poznań. It realistically describes social and cultural space of Poland in the last thirty years. *Opium w rosole* [Opium in broth] features the martial period and *Pulpecja*<sup>1</sup> is about the privatisation of economy. These events serve as the background for the

<sup>1</sup> A nickname.

story of a loving, loyal and responsible family's everyday life, first loves, victories and failures. The great popularity of the series can be ascribed to the creative use of a family saga, together with models of the rites-of-passage book and the moral novel.

Contemporary Polish young adult fiction has developed mainly in the form of the moral novel, fantasy, or the action-adventure novel. Edmund Niziurski's action-adventure books include *Przygody Bąbla i Syfona* (The Adventures of Bąbel and Syfon) (1993), the first of a trilogy, followed by *Bąbel i Syfon na tropie* [Bąbel and Syfon on the track] (1994) and *Największa przygoda Bąbla i Syfona* [The greatest adventure of Bąbel and Syfon] (1999). This is a story of some pupils whose passion for solving detective puzzles matches their need to help others. The development of a detective adventure plot has empathic overtones. The teen detectives undertake an emotional mission of confronting crude reality: they identify members of juvenile gangs who mob other pupils (*The Adventures of Bąbel and Syfon*), or distribute drugs in the school (*The Greatest Adventure of Bąbel and Syfon*). Niziurski is a master of suspense and the merit of his latest novels is the combination of empathetic moral teaching and an entertaining plot. Although he is talking about serious problems, the stories are both moving and entertaining.

Another author of youth fiction worth a mention is Dorota Terakowska, whose writing, popular with teen readers, is also appreciated by literary critics. Her *Władca Lewawu* [The Lord of Lewaw] (1989) is on the school reading list, *Lustro pana Grymsa* [Mr Grym's mirror] (1985) has been announced a teen best-seller and *Córka czarownic* [The witches' daughter] (1991) has appeared on the IBBY Honour List. The artistic success of Terakowska's books is due to the use of magic realism and symbolism, which support affective and cognitive processes in the young, as well as to the combination of plot schemes, characteristic of the rite-of-passage and the psychological novel.

As this brief discussion of contemporary teen fiction in Poland has attempted to show, over the last decades literary writing for the young has undergone considerable changes in the genres, construction of characters and in the strategies of communication between the writer and the reader.



## Polish Literature for the Youngest Readers, 1990–2006

Grzegorz Leszczyński

The fifteen years indicated in the title refer to an important and stormy period. Its importance lies in the considerable number of emergent names, the distinct presence of the younger generation of graphic designers, and the formation and establishment of publishing standards in the domain of children's books. The 'stormy' quality relates to the interest of literary critics and university researchers accompanying the development of this kind of literature. Moreover, because of meaningful initiatives (All Poland Reading to Children, Canon of Books for Children and Adolescents, and the Art for the Young Prize awarded by the president of the Republic of Poland), the wider public has also become more interested in children's literature.

One of the foremost achievements of the period is due to the overcoming of the predominance of translated literature over Polish literary production, and the formation of attractive publishing offerings (owing to contributions made by both the younger and the remarkably active mature graphic designers). In both areas, 2000 was a crucial year in relation to the shaping of the modern market for children's books.

The most significant offerings of prose works intended for younger children may be summarised as being in the realm of laughter. The dominant feature is wit, based, on the one hand, on the adaptation of the narrator's knowledge to the child's perspective as far as the understanding of the world goes, and, on the other hand, on the contrasted features of the characters. Here mention must be made of some very successful debuts, notably those of Grzegorz Kasdepke and Paweł Beręsewicz. In these works, a note of reflection typically accompanies the humorous aspect, while the didactic quality is very subtly intertwined with the plot. Unlike the prose of earlier years and contrary to current sociological predictions, strong, emotional communication between father and children underlies both writers' prose works, which is combined not infrequently with an image of a complete and happy family. Literary works such as these, by introducing implied readers into happy family life, into a circle of people who actually love each other and make up a genuine community of laughter, may act as a kind of compensation for those who lack this background. Though a sense of community embraces all the characters, the satire is particularly directed at the adult characters in Kasdepke's *Kacperiada* [Caspariad] (2001) and Beręsewicz's *Co tam u Ciumków?* [What's going on at the Ciumeks'?] (2005). Clearly evident here are echoes of the creative attitudes of earlier writers such as Tuwim and Brzechwa who treated the child seriously but presented the adult figures in a distorting mirror. This approach to the plot formation, the image of the world and the narration has manifested itself with full power in Joanna Olech's *Dynastia Miziołków* [The Miziołek dynasty] (1994). The realm of laughter is the domain of childhood, so it is quite natural that the literary public thus addressed has received the book with genuine interest.

A reflective and more intimate trend is also present in some contemporary prose works for children. This requires concentration from readers, sensitivity to changing moods and a readiness to face a reality which is shaped in a symbolic way. Last but not least, it depends on the reader's gift for crossing the border of rational thinking – a trait characteristic of childhood. Whereas the humorous writers are predominantly male, books based on evocative moods and reflection are predominantly written by female authors such as Liliana Bardijewska and Anna Onichimowska, though also worthy of note alongside them is the successful debut of Jacek Lelonkiewicz. An important item in this genre is Katarzyna Kotowska's *Jeż* [Hedgehog] (2004), a book lavishly rewarded with prizes. Half fairy tale and half realistic story, addressed to her own adopted son, it is an account of the difficult growth towards maturity of the adoptive parents as they come to love and gradually 'domesticate' the initially alienated child. The 'different' child problem is also tackled by Ewa Grętkiewicz in her book *Szczekająca szczeka Saszy* [Sasha's barking jaw] (2005), a story of a little boy from Belarus who visits his cousins in Poland and spends some time going to school with Polish children.

Among the highlights of children's literature, there have been volumes of children's fairy tales by the famous philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, *Kto z was chciałby rozweselić pechowego nosorożca?* [Who'd like to cheer up the unlucky rhinoceros?] (2005) and Hanna Krall, an outstanding author of literary reports including *Co się stało z naszą bajką* [What has become of our fairy tale?] (1994).

After the death of Danuta Wawiłow, credited with setting the tone of lyrical poetry for children, there was what might be described as a stagnation in children's poetry at the beginning of this period, with Dorota Gellner remaining as the only lyric poet currently active. New important names emerged in the mid-1990s: Zofia Beszczyńska, Małgorzata Strzałkowska, Marcin Brykczyński, a practitioner of linguistic poetry, and the prematurely deceased Emilia Waśniowska.

Of an established generation of authors whose oeuvre has for years included books for the youngest children, Chotomska, Kulmowa and Papuzińska are still in the prime of creativity.

Many of the published books for children are masterpieces of graphic design and the art of book publishing. The contemporary graphic designer's working method consists in an organic approach to the book. This implies a search for means of expression as a result of which visual narration is no longer simply complementary to literary narration or the author's poetic vision rendered in words. The objective is thus to quicken children's visual imagination and stimulate their sensitivity to art, so that, when confronted with the element of beauty, they begin to think in non-verbal terms, in the language of images. It can be claimed that there is a new 'philosophy of the book' where the operation of a published work involves simultaneously the word (the writer's creative act), symbolic association (the act of reception) and visual narration (the graphic designer's creative act). This distinctive philosophy is based on the dynamic process of moving both towards and away from literary narration, with mutual relationships repeatedly emerging and disintegrating. Illustrations at times run parallel to words and at other times tell a story of their own, quite often playing in counterpoint with the word, and the contrapuntal dialogue between images and text develops within one single work, one single publishing undertaking. This is evident in the illustrations of Stasys Eidgrigevičius, Maria Ekier, Grażka Lange, Krystyna Lipka-Sztarbałło and Józef Wilkoń.

In the area of prose works for adolescents, the past fifteen years bear the mark of Dorota Terakowska's oeuvre. This author of fantasy novels died in the prime of her creative powers. Her works bring reflective insights into the most difficult problems of the present, such as homelessness, striving for identity, a sense of alienation and rejection, and transcendental anxieties. Her prose suggests no ready-made solutions. On the contrary, it springs from the conviction that wisdom depends on an independent search for answers in the labyrinth of ready-made solutions and philosophical systems. Other authors writing about the hardships of adolescence at present are Marta Fox, Barbara Kosmowska, Anna Onichimowska and Beata Ostrowicka.

As a distinctive phenomenon, there is also the emergence of a revolutionary formula for what is known as a 'girl's novel', credit for which, strangely enough, does not go to female authors but to male prose writers starting their careers. A likely conclusion may be that the traditional convention of prose for the young has undergone re-evaluation. Tomek Tryzna's novel *Panna Nikt* [Miss Nobody] (1995) has given rise to much discussion. It is a novel about a contemporary young girl who lives at the intersection of cultures: traditional rural culture, contemporary liberal culture and the 'artsy' world. The protagonist's initiation into maturity is brutal.

Among the most outstanding literary works of this type during the period discussed is Zdzisław Domolewski's *Zosia pleciona* [Zosia's plaiting] (2003), which, though awarded prizes, has been on the whole overlooked by the young reading public. This is a low-key tale of difficult life in a poor village after the collapse of the former state farm (PGR). The first person narration conjures up a cosy mood conducive to concentration on personal experiences and observations.

To accompany the young generation of writers are the mature authors Ewa Nowacka and Krystyna Siesicka, both of whom create the world of their novels in an original way. Their basic quality is that of approaching reality from the standpoint of adults rather than attempting a quasi-youthful perspective. In this way, a book for the young reader ceases to be a reading experience where the mature writer claims to know the problems of present-day adolescents. Instead, it turns into a form of dialogue where the experienced author is able to share his or her thoughts with the young reader with no pretence that the world described is specific to the young people's sphere of experience. Małgorzata Musierowicz's oeuvre as a writer is a literary phenomenon in itself. Her saga of the Borejko family, involving more than fifteen volumes, records the transformation undergone in contemporary society, the changing youth attitudes and the dynamism of culture. The books of this saga have been at the top of popularity lists for thirty years.

Altogether, recent books for young readers add up to a rich and remarkably versatile list, attractive as literary assets, and presenting a very varied panoply as works of book art and the art of publishing.

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## Slovenian Children's Literature

*Darja Mazi-Leskovar*

This overview of Slovenian children's literature aims at presenting a selection of the production of quality literature written in the Slovene language and read by children from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. For historical reasons, literary production became the strongest expression of Slovenian national identity. Literature is exceptionally rich, something that is stressed also by the English researchers Gow and Carmichael (2000). Children's literature, too, has been extremely productive, and hence it is not possible within this paper to present works addressing all age groups. I am limiting myself by excluding book production targeting very young children and teenage and young adult readers.

Before there were special books addressing children's particular needs, *Abecedarium* [ABC book] and *Catechismus* [Catechism], written by Primož Trubar and published in 1550, were read by children. They were used for elementary instruction until the start of the nineteenth century, when Slovenian authors started writing under the influence of Romanticism. However, children were also initiated into the world of literary creation through oral tradition, particularly through lullabies, folk tales, fairy tales and proverbs, and through parables and other genres conveying moral and religious instruction.

The start of Slovenian children's literature was strongly marked by the pronounced influence of the German–Austrian cultural space. As a rule, texts addressing children featured children as main characters; for example, a moralistic tale *Blaže and Nežica in Sunday School* (1842) written by Bishop Anton Martin Slomšek. Nevertheless, one of the most popular tales ever written in Slovenian, *Martin Krpan from Vrh* (1858), written by Fran Levstik, presents an adult hero who outwits the emperor to whom Slovenians were subjugated. Levstik also wrote the first children's poems *Children's Games in Songs* (1880).

At the start of the twentieth century, Oton Župančič, one of the most appreciated crossover poets and one of the best translators of Shakespeare, wrote under the influence of new Romanticism. He also used folk songs to create milestones of the poetic world of Slovenian childhood which are still very much alive today. With Župančič's best work, *Ciciban and More* (1915), the until then predominant didacticism was replaced by aesthetic criteria. Until the Second World War these new criteria were followed by a progressive group of poets which included a few women, for example, Anica Černež and Lili Novy, who wrote also for adults. Throughout the century, several crossover poets wrote high quality poetry for children. Even though 'in the first decade after 1945, ideological involvement can be noticed' in children's literature, poetry 'showed signs of freeing itself of ideology' (Kobe, 1996: 9) since the mid-1950s. Tone Pavček and Kajetan Kovič were the first to continue the tradition of the period before the Second World War. Later, other acclaimed and widely read crossover contemporary poets such as Niko Grafenauer, Dane Zajc and Jože Snoj joined them. Although their poetics differ, most of their poetry deals with the happy and humorous aspects of childhood. However, the woman poet Saša Vegri introduces the theme of unhappiness and thus joins Grafenauer in the versification of existentialist questions. Boris A. Novak, another crossover poet, in 1990 published *The World in Poetic Forms*, a collection of poems in which teenagers and young adults are able not only to read poems in various poetic forms but also to learn about the forms themselves.

The development of prose was marked by realism in the first half of the twentieth century. In the period before the First World War, Fran Milčinski and Josip Ribičič wrote realistic stories and fantasies. The former wrote *Birds without Nests*, a story of neglected children, which is still read today, even though Milčinski is best known for the collection of humorous tales *Butalci* [The idiots] (1949). This has been considered one of the best of this genre in the Slovene language. After the First World War, social realism came into the foreground, and after the Second World War 'topics on national resistance struggle were most frequent' (Kobe, 1996: 9). In the 1950s, social empathy is strongly stressed in the work of Prežihov Voranc and France Bevk, both



of whom came from the border regions of Slovenian territory, the former from the north, bordering Austria, and the latter from the west, bordering Italy. Issues relating to national identity can therefore be found in their writing for young readers. In the late 1950s, the world of an urban child was introduced in the work of Anton Ingoli. In the following decades, realistic stories were written by numerous writers, among whom were women authors such as Kristina Brenk. Slavko Pregl wrote about typical boys, Polonca Kovač about girls (*Špelce*, 1983) and Bogdan Novak created a collection about friends. Primož Suhodolčan is the author of a sports trilogy (1994–2000) that is particularly popular with boys.

Fantasy writing re-emerged with Ela Peroci, a woman writer who introduced modern tales into children's prose. Her creations *My Umbrella Could Fly* (1955) and *The Cat Took My Slippers* (1957) were translated into several languages. Since then there has been a continuing thread of fantasies presenting unrealistic secondary worlds, and fantasy became a major genre in the second half of the century. Lojze Kovačič, one of the most renowned Slovenian mainstream authors, enriched children's fiction with the introduction of modernist elements in his stories. His story *The Most Powerful Boy in the World* (1977) presents the standpoint of a small boy. The animal fairy stories of Kajetan Kovič, *Tomcat Tom* (1975) and *The Dragon Direndaj* (1981), have become classics of children's reading. Among the authors who established themselves in the 1980s ranks a crossover writer Marjeta Novak Kajzer, whose *Kužmucke* (1984) is marked by empathy for a child who desires to have a pet. Empathy is central also in the work of Peter Svetina, the crossover author of the story *Vid's Angel* (2000). Bina Štampe Žmavc who wrote *Goblin with Big Ears* (2002) represents the authors who advocate respect for diversity. It is with these general themes that Slovenian children's literature prepares its readers for life in the multicultural world.

Slovenian literature can address a multicultural audience particularly with its illustrations. At international fairs, illustrators traditionally attract the attention of experts and the professional public. Accordingly, international prizes awarded to artists are considered as recognition for the entire Slovenian literature since the text promotes artistic expression. Conversely, the translation of texts normally also entails the promotion of illustration. Among the contemporary Slovenian artists who are also authors, Lilijana Praprotnik Župančič is the most successful. Her works have been translated into seventeen languages and thus enter into international exchange – a process thanks to which Slovene children traditionally also enjoy an important selection of translations from other languages.

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## Literature: A Personal Experience

*Judit Ward*

When I was thinking about my experience of literature as I was growing up in Hungary, I began to search my mind and try to find something different and specifically Hungarian about my world of stories, books, characters and poetry. But, as I recalled my memories, I realised that my experience could be the experience of anyone growing up in the modern world today. The literature of my mother tongue is so closely intertwined with world literature that it is hard to separate and classify particular stories or characters that carry more meaning for me, whether they are from Hungarian literature or from another language. So, here is my story, a story of an ordinary child who grew up in Hungary and who, as an adult, embraced English culture and language as her own.

My earliest memory of being read to was looking at a little picture book about a dog. I remember loving this book and I can still recall some words and phases from it. The only thing I remember about learning to read to myself is that the reading books in Hungary were very colourful and the words in them were separated into syllables which were joined together by hyphens. Compared to my sister who was up at night as late as possible with only a little light, reading book after book, I was not an enthusiastic reader and I mainly enjoyed picture books with little text. I remember treasuring a children's encyclopaedia that I got for Christmas when I was about ten years old – I loved flicking through the colourful pictures learning about all sorts of places, animals or historical events. Although I found compulsory reading a real effort at times, I really enjoyed discussing these books – analysing the characters, the events that happened to them and the underlying message that was communicated through the book. I particularly enjoyed reading classics in secondary school, such as the plays of Shakespeare, the books of Hemingway and Steinbeck and some books by Hungarian authors. Poetry suited me particularly well, as an experience or feeling is concentrated in poems and a lot is communicated through very precise use of language. Perhaps if anywhere, the uniqueness of a particular language is present in poetry, as images created in the mind are so closely linked to particular words and phrases of the language used that it may be impossible to create the same images using a different language.

If I didn't read too many books as a child, I certainly made up for it as a mother. I have been reading to my children for the last thirteen years. We have enjoyed countless books together and I have loved getting lost in the stories – being happy, sad, or talking on different characters (although I am told my Scottish accent needs a lot of work). I have also read a large number of non-fiction books and articles through my three years of studying sociology and history in my second language. These texts challenged my way of thinking and encouraged me to reinterpret the world around me – its past, present and future. Apart from holidays, I had very little time for reading fiction books for myself through these years and it is still the case today to a certain extent. My reading at the moment is focused around educational materials, although I have a chance now to read children's literature as part of my studies. What little time I have left for personal reading today – apart from flicking through magazines, brochures and newspapers – is spent reading a few pages of a Shakespeare play (it has been one of my ambitions to read Shakespeare in his own language) or a few poems from a Hungarian anthology, which allows me to taste Hungarian words again.

Overall, I believe that a truly meaningful thought or feeling is universal and is understood throughout the world by all who are willing to embrace a new idea and willing to explore themselves. I have, therefore, great respect for people who are working on translations and are helping to share ideas, feelings and images – adding to a global, but very personal, experience of literature.

## Selected Children's Books Originating in or Relating to Central and Eastern European Countries

*Pam Robson*

Classic and well-established titles such as *Heidi* and the Chalet School series have not been included in this list.

### Translations

#### **Els de Groen, *No Roof in Bosnia, Spindlewood*, 0907349750**

Translated from the Dutch by Patricia Crampton, this powerful novel is set in Bosnia in 1994. The UN hopes to forge a new group of countries, effectively separating nationalities and cultures, including Muslims, Serbs and Croats. Aida, a Muslim, is alone as the story opens, having narrowly escaped being raped. She stumbles across an old lady, Antonia, who is doing her best to help those fleeing the chaos. Through her, Aida meets other teenagers from various cultures – Muslim, Serb and Romany (nicknamed Blacks). One of the group is to die.

#### **Angelika Glitz, illus. Annette Swoboda, *Prince Charming and Baabarella, Cat's Whiskers*, 1903012406 (a picture book)**

This anthropomorphic landscape title, based on the Cinderella fairy tale, was first published in Austria in 2000 as *Prinz Franz Total Verlicht*. No translator is credited on the title page of this translation, published in 2001. Prince Charming, a ram, is intent on finding a wife, but without his glasses he fails to see the four beautiful sisters. Instead he is drawn to the sound of laughter from Baabarella, though she looks very messy. The four sisters decide to make themselves just as messy and arrive at the wedding looking unkempt – then the ram puts on his glasses. He and Baabarella 'lived happily ever after'.

#### **Christine Nostlinger, *The Cucumber King*, Hutchinson, 0099339404**

First published in 1972, this title is translated from the German by Anthea Bell. The story opens in an Austrian town on Easter Monday. The Hogelmann family discover a strange character in their kitchen – it is an animated cucumber wearing a crown and claiming to be a king overthrown by its subjects. Dad sides with the 'king' and so succeeds in alienating the whole family. But Dad is a tyrant and this situation leads his unhappy family to rebel against his domineering ways. Much powerful phallic symbolism seems to dominate the plot. A happy ending sees the eviction of the 'king'.

#### **Anna Rutgers van der Loeff, illus. Alie Evers, *Avalanche!*, Puffin, 0140301313**

A Swiss setting for this Dutch title, first published in 1954, translated by Dora Round, with black-and-white artwork by Alie Evers. This is a moving story about the triumph of friendship and cooperation over adversity. A group of war orphans from the Pestalozzi village are on a skiing holiday in the Swiss Alps when avalanches strike the village. The theme is survival, physical and emotional, through friendship.

#### **Ursel Scheffler, *The Spy in the Attic, North/South*, 1558587276**

This story was first translated from Swiss/German in 1997 by Marianne Martins. There are six short chapters with bold print and full colour artwork by Christa Unzner on every spread. When a strange man, Mr Leon, moves in upstairs, Martin mistakenly becomes convinced that he is a spy: Mr Leon wears a wig and gloves because he has been involved in an accident. He and Martin become friends.

#### **Ursel Scheffler, illus. Ruth Scholte van Mast, *Be Brave, Little Lion! North/South*, 0735812640**

An illustrated story for younger readers, translated from Swiss/German by J. Alison James. A delightful anthropomorphic title about a lion family in its natural surroundings; the reader hears the lions 'speak'. Lea is the boldest of the three cubs, she learns that it is prudent to be afraid of things like men with guns. A moralistic tale with full colour artwork by Ruth Scholte van Mast on almost every page.

## Texts written in English

**Annie Campling (Gaye Hicyilmaz), *And the Stars were Gold*, Orion, 1858814812**

This moving story, told mostly in the present tense, shifts between past (1940) events occurring in Poland and Russia, and present events in England. Richard's mother has walked away from her family and as he listens to the elderly Stefan tell his life story he learns to cope. A complex, challenging story with strong characterisation.

**Annie Campling (Gaye Hicyilmaz), *Smiling for Strangers*, Orion, 185881491X**

The story opens in war-torn former Yugoslavia. Nina's grandfather tells her to flee to England and seek out a contact of her mother's; his advice is to 'smile at strangers' to get help, advice that does not always help. It provides a horrifying picture of events in former Yugoslavia, but with interesting fairy-tale references and parallels.

**Adele Geras, *Voyage*, Barn Owl Books, 1903015006**

First published in 1983, this historical novel is set in 1904 on-board a refugee ship carrying Jews, fleeing persecution, from Eastern Europe to America. The storyline covers only the journey. All the characters must cope with the appalling conditions in their own way. A magnified view is presented of the effects of prejudice and anti-Semitic behaviour. Geras turns victims into heroes as they triumph over adversity.

**Esther Hautzig, *The Endless Steppe*, Puffin, 014036160X**

This true story was first published in 1968. Esther is a young Polish girl from a wealthy Jewish family. During the Second World War the Russians arrest Esther and her family and exile them to Siberia. Life is hard and debasing but they survive, unlike their extended family who all perish in the Nazi death camps. This is a harrowing, first-person narrative. The family returns to Poland only to face Polish anti-Semitic abuse.

**Gaye Hicyilmaz, *The Frozen Waterfall*, Faber, 0571194958**

Twelve-year-old Selda leaves her homeland of Turkey with her mother and two sisters to join his father in Switzerland. The author describes with stark realism the isolation felt by foreigners in a strange country. Selda is intelligent and soon learns German but she suffers racial insults at school. She has two friends, the daughter of a rich Swiss industrialist and a Turkish refugee who is an illegal immigrant. A striking contrast emerges between the lives of these two friends.

**Gaye Hicyilmaz, *Pictures from the Fire*, Orion, 1858818966**

This is the sequel to *Girl in Red*. Emilia, a Romanian gypsy child with a talent for art, makes secret sketches which reveal her unhappy past. She longs to escape the life she leads, locked in a hotel room. The family has fled Romania to settle in the UK where Emilia makes her first attempt to break away from her apparently unloving parents. Racist thugs seem to emerge wherever the family settle and they leave for the continent. Finally Emilia decides that she must get free. The narrative is retrospective; not an easy read.

**Eva Ibbotson, *The Star of Kazan*, Macmillan, 1405020547**

The setting for this story is Austria and Germany; the opening is the end of the nineteenth century with the birth of the central character, Annika. She is a foundling but her foster home proves to be a loving one. Annika is in the care of three professors and their servants until the day an apparently titled lady claims to be her mother and takes her to Germany. There she undergoes hardships but is eventually rescued. An amazing picture of Austria at that time emerges, featuring the Lipizzaner horses.

**Ann Jungman, illus. George Thompson, *Vlad the Drac*, Frances Lincoln, 1903015227**

First published in 1982, this is the first title of a series about a diminutive young vampire with an aversion to blood. While holidaying in Romania, Paul and Judy discover the eponymous Vlad and bring him back to England, to be discovered much later by their parents and returned to Romania, where he marries and has children. Black and white artwork by George Thompson.



**Kathy Kacer, *Clara's War*, Second Story Press, 1896764428**

This is a Canadian publication produced with the assistance of the Ontario Arts Council. The author relates a factual story about a Czech Jewish family persecuted by the Nazis. Clara and her family live in Prague; they are summoned to the railway station and sent to the walled town of Terezin, a stopping-off place before the final stage of a journey to Auschwitz. Life is made bearable when a production of the musical *Brundibar* is staged. The writing style is stiff but the reader gains insight into history.

**Judith Kerr, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, 0006754007**

The setting for this modern classic is Germany in 1933. Nine-year-old Anna and her family are Jewish. Father disappears and the family flees to Switzerland; the eponymous pink rabbit is left behind. Now refugees, they move on to France and finally London. The reader sees similarities and differences across Europe prior to the Second World War. Anna learns French and adapts to change. The core of this moving story is anti-Semitism.

**Jenny Koralek, *War Games*, Egmont, 140520074X**

In 1939, Hugo, a Jew, is taken from Czechoslovakia to Scotland. Holly comes to England from South Africa with her parents as war becomes imminent. Hugo and Holly become close, and the war is seen through their eyes. War provides a background to this turmoil of human emotion.

**Christa Laird, *Shadow of the Wall*, Red Fox, 009940057X, and *But Can the Phoenix Sing?* Red Fox, 009950121X**

The setting for the first novel by Laird is the Warsaw ghetto during the Second World War. Fourteen-year-old Misha and his two sisters live in the ghetto orphanage because their mother is dying. Dr Korczak, the orphanage leader is portrayed as a selfless man of amazing insight; his is a true story and he has become a Polish hero. There is a tragic ending when the doctor and the orphans are sent 'east' to their deaths. Misha tells this story and witnesses appalling scenes of murder and brutality. Laird portrays the indomitable spirit of human nature, courage and self-sacrifice in the face of adversity. The story continues with the sequel *But Can the Phoenix Sing?*, about Misha's escape from the Warsaw ghetto to join the partisans in the forest. His story is told retrospectively in a letter to his grandson Richard, who consequently acquires a new maturity and understanding through his grandfather's experiences.

**Bel Mooney, *The Voices of Silence*, Mammoth, 074972644X**

Flora is thirteen years old; she lives in communist Romania. The time is prior to the revolution that occurred after the opening up of the Berlin Wall in Germany. Life is hard, Flora's mother must queue for basic household goods. Spies are everywhere, even in school, as Flora discovers to her cost. Her father must escape from the secret police. Then revolution happens and many die. Mooney creates an authentic picture of a time of upheaval in Europe.

**K. M. Peyton, *Snowfall*, Scholastic, 0590133497**

This historical romance is set in Victorian times. The central character is Charlotte who is isolated with her grandfather. She is determined to escape the drudgery of her female role when an arranged marriage with the curate becomes imminent. Through her brother Ben she is drawn into the aristocratic world of Oxford graduates who enjoy climbing in Switzerland. The story spans a generation and is a substantial, gripping read.

**Christine Pullein-Thompson, *Across the Frontier*, Andersen Press, 0862642981, and *The Long Search*, Andersen Press, 0862643325 (out of print)**

The setting for these books is vaguely Eastern Europe prior to the collapse of communism. Ion cannot bear to leave his grandmother alone and escape to the West. An amnesty for all leads to the sequel, a story of revolution, torture and shootings.

**Philip Pullman, *The Tin Princess*, Scholastic, 0439997119**

A Sally Lockhart story first published in 1994. The setting is a tiny European country sandwiched between Germany and Austro-Hungary; events take place in the Victorian era. Sally is in America with her husband Daniel. Jim has found the missing Adelaide

who has married a prince. Murders and assassinations follow and Adelaide becomes queen. Events culminate in a German invasion but Jim and Adelaide escape.

**Stewart Ross, from an original manuscript by Andor Guttman, *The Star Houses, A Story from the Holocaust*, Hodder/Wayland, 0750237325**

This first person narrative is set in Hungary as the Russians are advancing to push back the Germans during the Second World War. The narrator is the young Andor Guttman, a Hungarian Jew. It is a harrowing tale of evil and persecution by Nazis and Hungarian thugs. At the back is a glossary.

**Ian Serraillier, *The Silver Sword*, Puffin, 01403364528**

First published in 1956, this is a story based on fact, beginning in Poland under Nazi occupation. Three children travel alone to Switzerland in search of their missing parents; they are joined by Jan, an amoral, temperamental boy, who has in his possession the eponymous silver sword which was given to him by the children's father and becomes a symbol of hope. After terrible hardships the family is reunited; reference is made to the International Children's Village set up after the war.

**Art Spiegelman, *Maus 1: A Survivor's Tale*, Penguin, 0140173153**

Part 1 of a comic strip biography. The author's father Vladek, a Jewish refugee from Hitler's Germany, recounts to his son the terrible events of the period. Black-and-white artwork is used to depict Jews as mice, Poles as pigs and Nazis as cats. This is the harrowing story of a wealthy Jewish family humiliated and debased by the Nazis. Book 1 ends as Vladek and his wife reach Auschwitz. The past is revealed against the backdrop of tension between father and son. Vladek is a difficult man; he and his new wife despise each other. Small, dense print and detailed artwork combine to create an uncomfortable experience for the reader.

**Jerry Spinelli, *Milkweed, Orchard*, 1843624842**

This emotional story allows the reader to view the Warsaw ghetto through the eyes of the narrator – a small boy with no name and no home who once belonged to a gang of boy thieves. In the ghetto he attaches himself to a Jewish family, though he is a gypsy. His friend Janina is sent to the ovens, but he settles in the USA.

**Marilyn Taylor, *Faraway Home*, O'Brien Press, 0862786436**

The setting for this story shifts from Austria to Ireland; the time span for the story is 1938–1941. Karl and his small sister Rosa are Jews. They travel with the Kindertransport scheme to escape Nazi persecution in Austria. In Ireland Karl stays at a refugee centre and works on the farm. Rosa is cared for by foster parents. Judy, an Irish Jew, joins the refugee centre to assist and at first resents the refugees. In time she gains some understanding and she and Karl become friends. A good story for older readers, if somewhat didactic. Winner of the Bisto Book of the Year Award.

**Jane Yolen, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, Barn Owl Books, 1903015103**

First published in the USA in 1988 and winner of the Jewish Book Award, this powerful novel employs the device of time travel to transport twelve-year-old Hannah, a Jew, back in time from present-day USA to the Nazi concentration camps of 1942. When at the Passover Seder, Hannah opens the door to let in the prophet Elijah, she enters a Jewish community in Poland and understands the full horror of the Holocaust and the daily life in the camps.

**Fairy/Folk Tales**

**Val Biro, *Tobias and the Dragon*, Blackie, 0216926521 (out of print)**

The humorous animated illustrations by the author enhance a substantial text in bold print of this Hungarian folk tale. Tobias has a large family to feed and leaves home in search of riches. He meets the dragon and tricks it into believing he is strong. The dragon's family take him in and through trickery he acquires barrels of gold.

**Nettie Lowenstein, illus. Elizabeth Harbour, *Anna and the Flowers of Winter*, Puffin, 014056554X**

This Bohemian folk/fairy tale with echoes of Cinderella is illustrated with subtle pastels by Elizabeth Harbour in a style that is almost surreal. Anna is sent out into the snow by her stepmother to pick violets. Cold and alone, she sees a fire in the forest around which sit twelve figures who keep her warm. They are the months of the year. The wicked stepmother and her daughter seek out the twelve figures and make demands on them to satisfy their own greed. They are punished accordingly and Anna is left to live in peace.

**Andrew Peters, illus. Zdenka Kabatova-Taborska, *Salt is Sweeter than Gold*, Barefoot Books, 1898000115**

In this lyrical retelling, a princess who loves her father more than salt is rejected. Her father, the king, fails to understand the significance of salt. All is resolved with the aid of magic. The substantial text is challenging. Lovely full colour illustrations by Zdenka Kabatova-Taborska.

**Edith Tarbescu, illus. Judith Christine Mills, *The Boy Who Stuck Out His Tongue*, Barefoot Books, 1841480665**

This Yiddish folk tale from Hungary has a strong moral to convey about good behaviour. A widow becomes annoyed with her unruly son when he refuses to help her and sticks out his tongue. When his tongue becomes stuck to the frozen railing she seeks help from her neighbours who propose some silly ideas to save him. Then the blacksmith decides to warm up the railing. The boy promises to behave in future. The highly illustrated pages have decorated edging.

## Reports

### **The Reading Experience Database: A talk by Katie Halsey**

Wednesday 6 February, Roehampton University

The aim of this project is the collection of evidence from a variety of sources about the actual reading done by ordinary people between 1450 and 1945. Sources such as autobiographies, memoirs, journals, letters, commonplace books, reading notebooks, court records and even marginalia and tombstones are scanned for evidence, without any literary bias governing the decision as to whether a source be included. This database is intended to be the first port of call for researchers, to send them back to the original source. Data are not always easy to interpret, and the question of reliability arises – for instance, can we rely on Harriet Martineau's claim in her *Autobiography* (1877) that she was seven years old when she first read Milton's *Paradise Lost*? This was a fascinating talk by Katie Halsey who is one of a team of five people at the London University School of Advanced Study working on this project.

### **Young People's Reading in 2005**

Saturday 1 March, Roehampton University

This half-day conference marked the launch of the second study of young people's reading habits made under the auspices of the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (NCRCL), Roehampton University, this time in partnership with the Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU) at Loughborough University, led by Sally Maynard. Speakers informed the invited audience about how this survey had developed from the original one in 1996; inevitably much more use is now made of advances in information technology, all responses being completed online. One of the most encouraging of the overall conclusions was that reading is clearly still an activity much enjoyed by young people, despite the competition from more visual technologies.

### **Picture This**

Tuesday 15 April, SCOPE

The project 'Putting Disabled Children in the Picture', led by Susan Clow, culminated in this event at the headquarters of SCOPE, whose chief executive Jon Sparkes introduced the project and the speakers, expressing his gratitude in particular to Quentin Blake for his support. A short video sequence revealed how much finding people like themselves in books had meant to a number of disabled children. Cherie Booth spoke about her hopes that the project would also help non-disabled children to understand the situations of the children portrayed. Jacqueline Wilson said how inspired she had been, and expressed her intention to work positively with disabled people (notably our own contributor, Rebecca R. Butler) to ensure the accuracy of her depictions of such characters. Awards were then presented to individuals and publishers whose work had been especially significant. See [www.childreninthepicture.org.uk](http://www.childreninthepicture.org.uk) for more information.

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

6 May, Naples

This half-day conference, organised by Stefania Tondo of the Suor Orsola Benincasa University and held in the splendid location of the Philosophical Institute at the Palazzo Serra di Cassano, had three areas of interest. Firstly there were papers (given in English but rendered intelligible to the audience by an Italian translation on screen) by Pat Pinsent and Gillian Lathey, who focused on the possible reasons for the sparsity of translations of continental children's literature into English, and the progress that the Marsh Award for translated children's books has made in remedying this situation.



Following this there was the launch of the translation of the proceedings of the 2005 British IBBY conference, *No Child is an Island*, into Italian – *Nessun Bambino è un isola: La letteratura per l'infanzia e la traduzione*, edited by Stefania Tondo. And so that the entire emphasis of the occasion should not remain only that of literary criticism, this was followed by the launch of a book for children (but very much addressed to a dual readership), *Minnie e la caffettiera* [Minnie and the coffee-maker] by Lucio d'Allesandro, a professor at the same university, and illustrated by Lello Esposito, a Neapolitan artist who is currently achieving international recognition. This text, bilingual in Italian and English, focuses on Minnie, the 'eternal and charming fiancée' of Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse, who discovers in an attic a silver coffee-maker inside which is imprisoned an elderly mouse, Topazio. (See [www.grauseditore.it](http://www.grauseditore.it) for further details.)

About 130 people attended this joyful, celebratory occasion, which later featured on the local cultural TV news.

### **School Librarian of the Year 2008**

7 May, London

At a ceremony at 1 Birdcage Walk, London on Wednesday 7 May, Philip Reeve presented the award for School Librarian of the Year to Nikki Heath of Werneth School, Stockport. The judging panel, who had visited many schools around the UK, commended Nikki's passion for supporting students 'to become both confident, independent researchers and to read for pleasure'. Members of the school staff also praised Nikki's infectious enthusiasm, which has led the library to be at the heart of everything the school does. The other shortlisted librarians were Karen Bhatti from Yeading Junior School, Hayes; Shona Phillips from The Royal Blind School, Edinburgh; Anne Dawson from Dulwich College Junior School; Robert Logan from Queen Elizabeth's Community College, Crediton; and Rebecca Marshall from Lipson Community College, Plymouth. All these 'enthusiastic, creative and talented librarians' were entertained afterwards for tea at the House of Commons. They were also presented with mugs – which will facilitate the way that all of them frequently provide fellow staff members with help and advice over a friendly cup of tea or coffee.

## Reviews

*The Dragon of Krakow*

Richard Monte (illus. Paul Hess), London, Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 84507 752 5, £4.99, 2008, 32pp.

The subtitle of this book, aimed at 8 to 11 year olds, is 'and other Polish stories'. The first story provides the title of the book, while the remaining tales have the intriguing titles of 'The amber queen', 'Mountain Man and Oak Tree Man', 'The gingerbread bees', 'Neptune and the naughty fish', 'The golden duck of Warsaw' and 'The king who was eaten by mice'. A section at the end of the book gives details of each story's published origin. The author acknowledges his Polish wife as the source of many stories from her country. The origins of the stories are wide ranging: Warsaw, Gniezno, Kraków, Toruń and the Baltic coast, thus giving a taste of the Polish traditions and landscapes.

The title story is based on a legend from Russia and Poland of the Wawel dragon, whose statue is to be found in a dragon's den below Wawel Castle in Kraków, recalling the days when Kraków was the capital city and the castle was the home of Poland's king. The dragon's propensity to breathe fire is a great attraction for the tourists. The story describes how the king needs to get rid of the dragon Smok Wawelski which is threatening to destroy the city, so promises a reward to anyone who can achieve this. The hero, a poor shoemaker, makes a hot, 'spicy' meal by stitching sulphur into an old sheep's hide. The lure works and causes the dragon to rush to the Vistula river to quench his thirst; the dragon drinks so much water that he explodes.

The title of 'The king who was eaten by mice' is self-explanatory. A king loves eating so much that his people often go without supper while he wines and dines every day. It is rumoured that he became king because he had murdered his uncles, the knights of Griezno. So the townsfolk plot his downfall ... and with the help of an army of mice, the gruesome ending ensues. The reward demanded by the mice is the abolition of mouse traps and poison.

'Mountain Man and Oak Tree Man' is a humorous variation on the title story. Here a king wishes to get rid of a dragon beneath his palace. Two boys grow as tall as giants and find that they can move mountains and pull up enormous forests of oak trees. The boys are orphans who were found in the forest by a bear and a wolf. These animals were escaping from the king's hunt; the animals adopt the boys (named Mountain Man and Oak Tree Man when they have grown into young men of extraordinary strength). In this variation the heroes are rewarded by marriage to the king's daughters.

The beauty of the amber of the fossilised sap of coniferous trees on the Baltic sea coast is celebrated in 'The Amber Queen' which tells of a mermaid who lives in an amber palace under the sea. This is a tale of anger, forgiveness and sadness.

The Baltic sea is also the setting for 'Neptune and the naughty fish', a story about a family of fish called Plaice. Little Plaice is very inquisitive and decides to look for the treasure described to her by old Salmon. However the treasure belongs to Neptune. When little Plaice is caught stealing some jewels with which she adorns her body, Neptune tells her 'You will be noticed all right! One day you will sit nicely on a fisherman's plate ...'. When little Plaice returns to her family, she finds that she has orange spots. And Neptune's sneering prophesy is fulfilled ....

The famous Toru gingerbread, described in 'The gingerbread bees', is said to taste so good because it contains honey from the bees of the forests near Toru . A baker's apprentice is out walking by a lake one morning when he rescues a queen bee from drowning. His reward is to become the most famous baker in the town, and he also marries the baker's daughter and takes over the business when the baker dies. This legend is kept alive today with a museum devoted to the gingerbread (piernika) (see [www.muzeumpiernika.pl](http://www.muzeumpiernika.pl)).



'The golden duck of Warsaw' is also about a shoemaker – a young apprentice who earns very little and dreams of becoming rich. In an inn he hears whispers of a golden duck that lives in a lake under Ostrogski Palace. And the duck talks to him when he adventures to find it. The duck gives him a bag of gold but with conditions on how he spends it. The tale has a moral: at the end of a day's spending, he declares 'What's the point of being rich, if you can't share your riches. I could never be happy like that ...'.

Each of the stories in this interesting, well-written, imaginatively illustrated and designed book is amplified with illustrations by Paul Hess: motifs on title pages, full-page pictures and inserts throughout the text. However it seems a shame that the book has been produced as a paperback with the illustrations in black and white. Paul Hess's illustrations and the imaginative placement of the figures within the text would be much enhanced by a larger hardback format in colour. The present format may well limit its immediate appeal to young readers when seen in a library or bookshop, but there are rich rewards for those who enter the fascinating stories inside.

**Jennifer Harding**

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### *Clarice Bean, Don't Look Now*

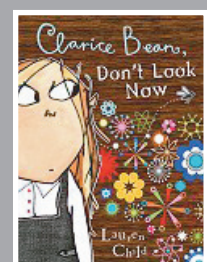
Lauren Child, London, Orchard Books, pb. 978 1 846 6507, £6.99, 2007, 253pp.

Readers may already be acquainted with *Clarice Bean, That's Me*, a colourful pictorial depiction of crowded family life and activities. *Clarice Bean, Don't Look Now* is a storybook with more words than pictures. On the cover Clarice is portrayed looking furtive against a background of geometric floral swirls and star doodles over which a bee hovers. Inside, the bee's flight continues across a blank page on to the title, through further decorative doodles, ultimately to arrive at 'Part One, Thinking and Spinning', and then at a striking heading, 'Where does infinity end?'.

From the outset, Clarice asks BIG questions; she is sleepless because her mind is thinking and spinning. Aids to hand are a special torch and book from her Granny in America, 'The Ruby Redfort Survival Book – What to Do When Your Worst Worry Comes Your Way'. Ruby Redfort is a detective who always has a useful thought in a crisis. Clarice has innumerable worries; making lists and then numbering the worries in order of seriousness to make them seem less bad is one recommendation. Having a stalwart best friend whose home you can retreat to when family life and relationships become too fraught is vital. But what can be done about the worry that you haven't even thought to worry about? For life can change suddenly and drastically. This happens when the bath of Clarice's supercilious sister Marcie overflows; a ceiling collapses and home becomes an inhospitable building site. School is a place where there are yet more concerns and complicated relationships, made all the worse for Clarice after her best friend Betty Moody and her family move to America.

'Part Two, The Same but Not the Same', chronicles Clarice's path through the seemingly never ending succession of crises and dramas that beset her daily. Eventually optimism prevails as she weathers the painful separation from her best friend with whom she can communicate via email and sometimes phone. With the restoration of the family home comes a room of her own. Friendships are tried then consolidated and a new friend discovered who is also a keen follower of Ruby Redfort's philosophy. The last chapter heading, 'Maybe infinity is not such a big worry after all', and the final words of the book over which the Ruby Redfort emblematic bee hovers, 'The trick is – don't lose any sleep over it kid', point to a less fraught outlook on life.

This is a delightful book, vividly written, humorous, decorative, utterly inimically Clarice Bean's voice and style. It comes with a stylish bookmark and a CD.



*Princess Grace*

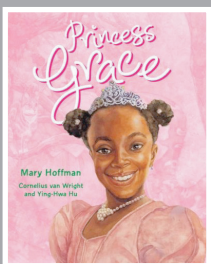
Mary Hoffman (illus. Cornelius van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu), London, Frances Lincoln, pb 978 1 84507 532 3, £11.99, 2007, 25pp.

There is more to this book than meets the eye (wherein lies its truth). A first glance at the cover shows Grace, smiling pertly at the viewer. She is dressed in marshmallow pink and a tinselly tiara and pearls complete the picture of a stereotypical princess/beauty queen. The background, which is also pink, reveals some faint imagery and raises the question of how to vary this commonplace, cloying shade whose effect is to obliterate individuality. However anyone acquainted with Grace (this is the sixth book about her and her family) will know that her character cannot be considered commonplace. If we turn the book over, we see how Grace now looks outwards, poised and radiant, attired in a sumptuous robe of distinctive design with a circlet of plain gold on her brow and a magnificent filigree necklet. The warm and sandy tones of the background complement this portrait, unlike the pink version. This contrast between front and back covers is repeated in the end papers: an empty double-page spread at the beginning is countered by the warm tones at the back. The back also features some text amplifying and enriching the preceding narrative, with information about the variety and range of traditional tales from all over the world and references to real-life princesses in history. There is also an identification of the cloth that Grace's robes are made from: the Ashante kente, 'Cloth of Kings', from the West African country of Ghana. What process of transformation lies between the covers?

The story is heart-warming, as are the soft-toned watercolour illustrations. The dedication 'For everyone who has ever wanted to be a princess' is first enacted for all readers by Grace, who delegates roles in her fairy-tale play to her Nana and to Paw Paw the cat. When an opportunity arises at school to choose two girls to play princesses in a community fund-raising parade, excitement and competition are feverish amongst the girls, whilst the boys respond with boredom. Grace and her two special friends embark on research to resolve the question of what a princess wears. This leads to an undoing of long-held assumptions and to more questions, such as what a princess does. With encouragement from Nana, the girls ask their sympathetic teacher for help. A class project of substance develops and from it emerges a wealth of diverse cultural and historical perspectives, winning over the boys.

Everyone is chosen for the play, and what to wear becomes a personal matter. Grace remembers the family visit to the Gambia and the beautiful roll of cloth bought there. Nana makes the fine robe for Grace that has so much significance for those who recognise its design. Grace 'becomes' a princess through her new-found knowledge and understanding of what this means to her: a transformation wrought from experience, and magic that can be trusted.

**Judith Philo**





***Roar, Bull, Roar!***

Andrew Fusek Peters and Polly Peters (Illus. Anke Weckmann), London, Frances Lincoln, 1 84507 520 X, £4.99, 2006, 155pp.

Andrew Peters, poet and storyteller, and his wife, Polly, have drawn on folk tales and legends to create the action-packed series *Czech-mate Mysteries* for younger readers. *Roar, Bull, Roar!* is the first title in this series featuring the Kleček family, and it combines both accessibility and visual appeal for young readers. The print is bold and each of the sixteen chapters is illustrated in 'naive' style with a full-page black-and-white illustration. The Kleček family have moved from the Czech Republic and the story opens with the arrival of mother and father, with Jan and Marie, at their new home in rural England. Mr Kleček has been appointed to teach in the mathematics department of the local high school. Their arrival is a traumatic one when their car is attacked by a marauding bull. The narrative has been carefully constructed around a story within a story, the one mirroring the other. The young reader will quickly recognise the significance of the bull which features in both stories and hence the choice of title.

The Klečeks find that their rented home, Shoe Cottage, is barely habitable and their landlord an unpleasant villain who owns Bagbury Hall. Jan and Marie meet Lady Beddoes, a strange old lady who tells them the story of the Roaring Bull of Bagbury in which a shrunken bull is trapped inside a shoe. The authors proceed to lay a trail of clues for the reader, and it soon becomes apparent that any references to the bull or a shoe have significance. Eventually the discovery of title deeds to Bagbury Hall, inside a shoe which has been buried for years in a jackdaw's nest in the chimney of Shoe Cottage, causes events to escalate. After much danger and a police chase, Jan and Marie bring about the downfall of the evil landlord and Lady Beddoes is restored to her rightful home.

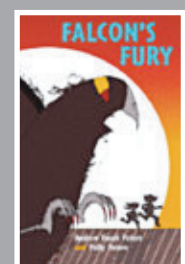
Social and cultural issues arise within the narrative. Jan joins the high school whilst Marie attends the local primary school; both experience bullying and prejudice. The carefully structured third-person narrative and fast-moving plot will keep young readers turning the pages as they follow the adventures of Jan and Marie. At the back is a useful guide to the pronunciation of Czech words and a glossary.

***Falcon's Fury***

Andrew Fusek Peters and Polly Peters (illus. Naomi Tipping), London, Frances Lincoln, 978 184507 634 4, £5.99, 2008, 160pp.

The second title in this series. A similar narrative structure, format and style is maintained, and young readers will no doubt find the familiarity appealing. The Kleček family are now guests of Lady Beddoes at Bagbury Hall. Jan and Marie witness a peregrine falcon attacking a wood pigeon directly above them. An aggressive gamekeeper then chases them and it is Lady Beddoes who comes to their rescue. In this title, the internal story again parallels the main story line: two giants, who are brothers, argue over a key and as a result the key is lost in a lake. The key is said to be guarded still by a peregrine falcon. Jan and Marie hear the story about the giants from the man they later learn is the gamekeeper's brother, Donald, when they visit the local castle. Donald and his brother each carry a stick bearing the carved head of a falcon; one brother is good, the other is not. The children know that falcons' eggs are being stolen and set out to find the culprit. The young reader vicariously participates in a dangerous adventure as the children bravely face their enemies, determined to succeed in their quest. Good and bad characters are clearly defined, as in the first title of the series, and various cultural and environmental issues are highlighted. The reader learns a great deal about Czech customs, food and language, while taking action to protect birds' eggs is shown in a positive light.

The main characters are allowed to develop within the well-structured narrative. The authors have created adventure stories with meaningful plots and plausible characters which allow the young reader familiar with the series the satisfaction of being able to predict the action.



### *Measuring Angels*

Lesley Ely (illus. Polly Dunbar), London, Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 84507 639 9, £11.99, 2008, 24pp.

This picture book, aimed at an age range 4–7, tells the story of a competition in a school. Pairs of children are set the task of growing a healthy sunflower. The narrator finds herself paired with Sophie, a former friend but now an enemy. The children build a cardboard angel and the girls talk to their weedy plant; it suddenly flourishes.

Dunbar's pictures are stylised, deliberately reflecting a child's own graphic manner, highly coloured and initially striking. It seems likely that they would easily command and retain the interest of young readers. The image of a wedge of swans swooping over the school is particularly memorable.

In places Ely's text is colloquial rather than grammatically precise: 'We made a sunflower angel! Gabriel, Sophie and me!'. This tactic probably makes it easier for young readers to identify with the characters. The characterisation is simple, as we would expect in a book of this nature and scope. The sunflower acts as a metaphor for the friendship between the narrator and Sophie – a friendship that flourishes, wilts and flourishes again.

The book steps carefully around the question of inclusiveness: Gabriel is black, and in the playground we see a child in a wheelchair. When the competition to grow the best plant reaches its climax, the teacher cancels the final judgment; there must not be a loser.

I am, however, left wondering whether the angel, central to the whole imagery, is acceptable to all religions and to non-believers.

### *Gervelie's Journey: A Refugee Diary*

Anthony Robinson and Anne Marie Young (illus. June Allan), London, Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 845 07652 8, £11.99, 2008, 22pp.

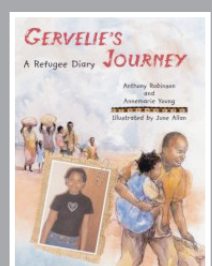
This picture book is the real-life recollection of a child born in the Republic of Congo in 1995, probably suited to the age range 7–12. Her family is devastated by political disruptions. Her parents are separated, her cousin and paternal grandfather shot dead. Her mother ends up with a brutal police commander who beats his stepchild. After temporary sojourns in the Ivory Coast and an unnamed European country, she and her father become refugees in Britain. At the time of writing their long-term status is undetermined.

The book is told in Gervelie's own words. The impact of catastrophe, murderous squads roaming the streets, the dispersal of families, the spread of conflict to areas considered safe and her mother's failure to stay in touch when the family is split – all this is recounted in a remarkably low-key, unemphatic manner. Such things happen, and people learn to cope. Judging by the child's reaction, it's also a moot point whether the savagery encountered in Africa is worse than the bureaucratic suspicion met in England. The immigration officer at Luton accuses Gervelie's father of lying: 'He was an African, like us. But he was really horrible.'

The graphic style combines photographs of the main characters with realistically drawn representations. It is a style well suited to this narrative, reminiscent of a scrapbook.

The most chilling feature of the book is the child's complete failure – presumably inability – to give any explanation of the violence she encounters. Is it tribal, political or just plain criminal? This gap is filled by some historical notes included as an appendix, headed 'Did you know?'

In the world of today, many young people will meet refugees in school or in their community. Books like this will help them understand the suffering such victims endure.



## *Snow Wings*

Jutta Goetze, London, Allen & Unwin, pb. 1 74114 463 9, £5.99, 2005, 294pp.

This is a quest novel. The boy Manfred and his friends – Dieter the mountain boy, Georg the baker's son, the bossy Anne, the spoiled Ziggi and a boy named I Don't Know because he can't remember his name – have to return the Key of Light to its rightful owner, the King of the Light Beings, in order to save his world and theirs. To achieve their mission they must defeat the Shadows – sinister creatures who remind us of Rowling's Dementors.

The stages of the children's journey are described in detail, which is sometimes excessive to the detriment of the narrative impetus. The characterisation is achieved at a simple and sometimes stereotypical level. The most strongly depicted characters in the book are probably the pets who accompany the children. These include Ziggi's cat Epsilon, whose superior antics often mirror those of her owner, and Violette, Anne's cockatoo, who often acts as the team's lookout and plays a central role in the denouement. From the point of view of style and vocabulary, there is not a great deal either to commend or to fault in Goetze's book. Personally I was not greatly seized by the minutiae of skiing which take up a good deal of space but other readers may differ. The 'snow wings' of the title are, predictably enough, a pair of skis.

There are a few inspired moments in the narrative, such as when the children create a living snowman to help them with their quest. But there are not enough such moments to grip the reader or to lift the book above a decent average level.

**Rebecca R. Butler**

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## *Bella's Chocolate Surprise*

Adam Guillain (illus. Elke Steiner), Chicago, Milet, pb. 978 1 84059 505 5, £5.99, 2007, 32pp.

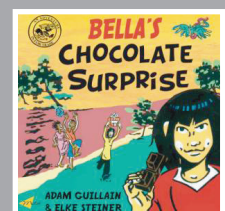
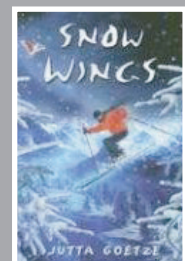
A further Bella Balistica adventure in which Guillain once more features something familiar within the everyday world of his young readers, while also introducing them to an unusual time or place probably beyond their experience. Bella was born in Guatemala and now lives with her adoptive mother in London. In a previous book she discovered a magical pendant that had once belonged to her Guatemalan birth mother, and was instantly connected with her animal twin – the Quetzal bird – who helps her in her adventures. It is curious therefore that *Bella's Chocolate Surprise* makes so little mention of where Europeans first discovered chocolate in the seventeenth century: in the Aztec and Mayan lands of Central America, part of which make up present-day Guatemala.

In this story, the Quetzal bird takes Bella to Ghana, where she finds out how Fairtrade chocolate production starts on the community-run plantations of cacao trees. Readers, like Bella, discover that although the revenue from the harvest now supports housing, medicine and education in these areas, the people are still too poor to be able to afford to buy the chocolate into which their crop is made. Despite the differences between Bella's home and those of the children in West Africa, Guillain emphasises the similarities between their lives, such as helping round the house and playing football.

Once again Steiner's illustrations reflect the heroine's South American origins, perhaps appearing unusually stylised in line and colour for young readers, but having value as an additional learning point.

**Bridget Carrington**

reviews



*The Faraway Island*

Dianne Hofmeyr (illus. Jude Daly), London, Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 84507 644 3, £11.99, 2008, 32pp.

This colourful and attractive picture book is a reworking of the story of a sixteenth-century Portuguese colonist Fernando Lopez, who on his return from Goa left ship at St Helena. Having become disfigured, he felt no longer able to face society, including his wife and children back home, but because of the friendship of passing sailors, he became less afraid, while the seeds they brought him flourished, making the island into a 'botanical garden'. Dianne Hofmeyr adapts this story, which is summarised at the end of the book, turning it into a fable of a man (never named) who thinks himself to be a monster and seeks isolation, but is redeemed by the kindness, not only of passing travellers but also of a seamstress who comes to share his island. Finally:

Something was twining and growing and taking root deep inside him.

Suddenly he knew what it was.

'I'm not a monster!

I never was!'

He spread his arms wide in the green light, threw back his head and laughed. He had found what he was searching for.

HAPPINESS!

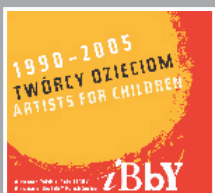
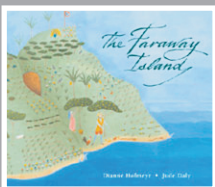
Thus the 'greening' of what at the beginning is a barren rocky island serves as an image of the regeneration of the heart of the seafarer.

Jude Daly's art work beautifully portrays the stages of the island's colonisation by the plants – first rice, then a lemon tree, bananas, pineapples, pomegranates and dates. The man's brief visit to Portugal, where he meets the queen as well as the seamstress who returns with him, affords Daly the opportunity to create a glittering contrast between the buildings of the city and the natural scenery of the island. The jacket picture of the twin-peaked island, adorned with a rich variety of flora with the couple gardening, offers an enticing image of a paradise whose inhabitants, unlike in the Bible, are not ejected.

*1990–2005 Twórcy dzieciom Artists for Children Almanach Polskiej Sekcji IBBY/ Almanac of the IBBY Polish section*

Ewa Gruda, Warsaw, Stowarzyszenia Przyjaciół Książki dla Młodych (Polskiej Sekcji IBBY), 2006, 83 909402 4 8, 154pp. Currently out of print – a new edition in preparation.

This dual-language volume is far more than simply a catalogue. It is 'the first attempt at describing the condition of the Polish children's book after the 1990 political and economic transformation'. The Introduction, after a description of IBBY's work both internationally and in Poland, contains the article by Grzegorz Lesczyński reprinted elsewhere in this issue of *IBBYLink*, together with two other general articles. In 'Things past and future: The Polish illustrated book over the last fifteen years', Krystyna Lipka-Sztabała reveals how the emergence of a free market after 1989 led to the disappearance of non-commercial books and a consequent decline in quality, but suggests that the situation is now slowly improving. 'Children's book market: A change for the better!' by Michał Zajac also reflects this spirit of optimism. A chronology of the fifteen years discussed in the Almanac follows, and there are then short biographies of 46 contemporary Polish children's writers (ages ranging from 38 to 90), revealing their high levels of academic achievement. This is followed by a similar presentation of 31 contemporary illustrators, this time accompanied by pictures representing the immense variety of their styles. The books section that follows is illustrated by the jackets of all the texts discussed. A short section on translators reveals cultural interchange in the area of children's books between Poland and France, Korea, China, Sweden, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Japan, Italy and Germany, but nothing as far as I can see involving English – perhaps this is no surprise! Finally there is a short list of publishers.





This immensely informative work must be particularly valuable within Poland itself, but it also surely offers information that could be very useful to English language publishers who might seek to know more about the abundance of children's literature which could be available for a wider audience. The IBBY Polish section deserves many congratulations on this enterprise, as well as for their many initiatives which include the award of a Book of the Year. See [www.ibby.pl](http://www.ibby.pl) for further information, or contact [ibby@ibby.pl](mailto:ibby@ibby.pl). The articles mentioned are available in English at [www.ibby.pl/index.php?id=51&lang=en](http://www.ibby.pl/index.php?id=51&lang=en).

***Tales about Things and Non-Things; New Polish Literature for Children and Young People (A Selection)***

Zofia Beszczyńska et al., Kraków, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, 2003, 83 88814 90 7. Currently unavailable.

This is a catalogue that was prepared for the 2003 Bologna Book Fair at which Poland was the guest of honour. It serves as a taster of the work of twenty-four Polish children's authors, providing translated excerpts from their books, supported by summaries of the plots, reproductions of the book jackets and short biographies. Some of the books, such as Katarzyna Kotowska's *Je* [Hedgehog] are becoming known, while others clearly deserve to make the transition to more general availability in the English-speaking world.

The Adam Mickiewicz Institute's website is at [www.iam.pl](http://www.iam.pl) and its email is [iam@iam.pl](mailto:iam@iam.pl).

Pat Pinsent

**Brief notes on other books**

***Black and White***

Rob Childs (illus. John Williams), London, Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 84507 751 8, £5.99, 2008, 128pp.

The audience of this short and unchallenging text, whose author admits to having been a goalkeeper in his younger days, is explicitly indicated: 'For all young footballers'. Although inclusivity issues are present (girls also play in the school team, which is distinctly multi-ethnic), I suspect that the majority of its readers will share the football passion of its protagonist, Josh, whose uncle Ossie is described as 'the best player in Britain'.

***Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde***

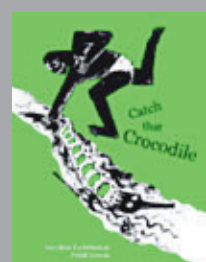
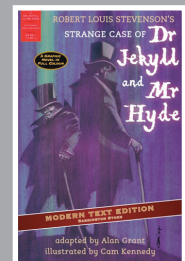
Alan Grant (adapter) (illus. Cam Kennedy, coloured and lettered by Jamie Grant and Niall Connolly), Edinburgh, Barrington Stoke, 978 1 842995 68 6, £7.99, 2008, 64pp.

This graphic novel version of the famous classic succeeds in capturing something of the atmosphere of horror and suspense that pervade the original, and should appeal to readers happier with less demanding text.

***Catch that Crocodile!***

Anushka Ravishankar (illus. Pulak Biswas), London, Tara Publishing, hb. 978 81 86211 63 2, £10.99, 2007, 40pp.

Delightfully illustrated, witty verse story of how a fish seller lures a lost crocodile back to the river when a policeman, a doctor and a famous wrestler have all failed.





***A Dictionary of Monsters and Mysterious Beasts***

Carey Miller (illus. Mary French), London, Barn Owl Books, pb. 1 903015 58 8, £6.99, 2006, 193pp.

Everything anyone could want to know about all kinds of monsters from the Abominable Snowman to the Yale, not forgetting such old favourites as Harpies and Ogres and such home-grown versions as the Lambton Worm and the Loch Ness Monster.

***Greek Hero***

Mick Manning and Brita Granström, London, Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 84507 683, £11.99, 2007, 40pp.

This book has won the 2008 English Association's Best Children's Illustrated Book Award (non-fiction Key Stage Two).

***Ghosting***

Keith Gray, Edinburgh, Barrington Stoke, pb. 978 1 84299 490 0, £4.99, 2008, 96pp.

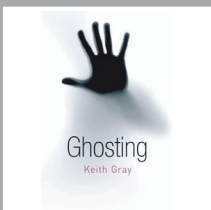
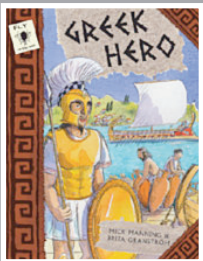
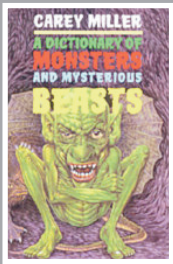
This book is designed to provide stimulating subject matter to readers whose ability lags behind their interests, and it certainly generates a sense of horror, as the narrator and his sister, who are fake mediums, get involved with some 'real' spirits.

***Arctic Hero: The Incredible Life of Matthew Henson***

Catherine Johnson (illus. Seb Camagajevac), Edinburgh, Barrington Stoke, 978 1 84299 493 1, £5.99, 2008.

Matt Henson, who travelled to the north pole with Robert Peary, is still too little known, and in this book Johnson also takes the opportunity to expose the difficulties faced by black people in the United States before the achievements of the Civil Rights movement.

**Pat Pinsent**



### Seven Stories new children's literature website

Seven Stories, the Centre for Children's Books, has a new website giving access to records of its extensive collection of artwork and archives. The site is accessible from the main Seven Stories website [www.sevenstories.org.uk](http://www.sevenstories.org.uk) – click on 'the collection' tab on the home page for a list of options. Authors such as Philip Pullman, Robert Westall, Peter Dickinson, Jan Mark and Berlie Doherty, illustrators including Edward Ardizzone, Harold Jones and Jan Ormerod, and editors such as Kaye Webb and Miriam Hodgson are well-represented in the Seven Stories collection. Original material held by Seven Stories includes draft manuscripts, sketchbooks and notebooks, correspondence and finished artwork. The archives are being made accessible as a result of an extensive cataloguing and preservation project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. To date, the catalogue contains over 4000 records and 300 images and it can be searched in a variety of ways. As the Seven Stories collection continues to grow the catalogues will be updated. The new website also includes an interactive game exploring items from the collection, and information on how to access the collection for research purposes.

For further information, contact [collections@sevenstories.org.uk](mailto:collections@sevenstories.org.uk). Seven Stories, the Centre for Children's Books, 30 Lime Street, Ouseburn Valley, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2PQ. Website: [www.sevenstories.org.uk](http://www.sevenstories.org.uk); phone: (+44) 845 271 0777; fax: (+44) 191 261 1931.

### Harvey Darton Award

Our congratulations to Tomoko Masaki who was joint winner (with Brian Alderson and Felix d'Oyens) of this award for 2006–2007, made 'for a distinguished contribution to the history of English children's literature'. Tomoko Maskaki's *A History of Victorian Popular Picture Books: The Aesthetic, Creative and Technological Aspects of the Toy Book through the Publications of the Firm of Routledge, 1852–1893*, Tokyo: Kazamo-Shobo (2006) was developed from her PhD thesis at Roehampton University. As Dennis Butts remarks in his appreciation in the *Children's Book History Society Newsletter* (vol. 90, April 2008), this is the first serious study of the Victorian toy book, which had been one of the most confusing areas of literary history, and this volume 'is a tribute to Tomoko's extraordinary researches'.

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## Forthcoming Events

### Children's Writers and Illustrators Group Conference 2008

Robinson College, Cambridge, Friday 29 August – Sunday 31 August 2008

Speakers will include: David Almond, Laurence Anholt, Anthony Browne, Polly Dunbar, Julia Eccleshare, Nicolette Jones, Graham Marks, William Nicholson and the Children's Laureate Michael Rosen.

There will be debates on the perils of reviewing, a frank look at the current state of the book market, and the interaction between children's publishing and other art forms. Workshops/parallel sessions will include: how to cope with school visits, taboos, from picture book to cartoon film, how to survive as a poet, literary agents, working in remote areas in Australia, publicity, how to manage time, story boarding, bringing back out-of-print books, an illustrator's view on schools and festivals, the man from the DTI and much more.

Outings organised include: chauffeured punting, Lucy Boston's magical house and garden, and Althea's glass studio. An on-site Heffers bookshop will stock delegates' and speakers' books.

Exhibitions will include Scope as well as MA students of the Children's Book Illustration course at Anglia Ruskin University.

Queries and further details including a draft programme to Enid Stephenson by email at [enid.stephenson@gmail.com](mailto:enid.stephenson@gmail.com), or phone the office of The Society of Authors on 020 7373 6642.

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

Froebel College, Roehampton University, Saturday 15 November 2008. The title of the conference is 'Deep into Nature: Ecology, Environment and Children's Literature'. Proposals for workshops should be submitted by 30 June by emailing a 200 word abstract to Laura Atkins.

Speakers include Roni Natov, Jo Readman, Dawn Casey, Tony Bradman, Michael Foreman, Michelle Paver, Susan Price, Natascha Biebow (Random House), Alison Kennedy (Egmont), Tessa Strickland (Barfoot Books), Peter Hunt and Nicholas Tucker.

Submissions for workshops and further detail requests to Laura Atkins; [l.atkins@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:l.atkins@roehampton.ac.uk); +44 (0)20 8392 3008; NCRCL, Roehampton University, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PU.

The next issue of IBBYLink (copydate 31 July) will look at gendered reading. The following issue (copydate 12 December) will be on children's literature and the environment and will contain summaries of the papers presented at the forthcoming IBBY/NCRCL MA conference in November. For both issues, articles on other subjects, reviews, reports, information about conferences and similar items are also welcomed.