
Papers

Explorations into Children's Literature

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The cover image by Ernest H. Shepard, from *Dream Days* by Kenneth Grahame, London, John Lane/Bodley Head, 1942; p 81.

EDITORIAL

In this issue of *Papers* we farewell Gillian Adams from our Advisory Committee. Gillian has been a referee since 2001, and she has resigned because she plans to concentrate on ancient and medieval literature for children and thus will not be able to maintain her practice of reading contemporary material. We thank Gillian for her interest in *Papers* and for her insightful reviewing of essays submitted for publication, and we wish her well for her ventures into ancient and medieval material, on which she has already published several notable essays.

The thematics and situational politics of bedtime stories—their telling or reading, the contexts in which they are received and mediated, the interpersonal relations which shape and are shaped by these negotiations—are crucial to many picture books for young readers, and in their essay 'Playfulness in Children's Picture Books about Bedtime: Ambivalence and Subversion in the Bedtime Story', Jane Torr and Kathlyn Griffith consider a group of such texts, including Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon*, Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth's *Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?* and *The Park in the Dark*, Margaret Wild and Ann James's *The Midnight Gang* and Chris Raschka's *Can't Sleep*. Torr and Griffith argue that notions of playfulness permeate many of these texts, many of which invoke not only playful moves by children as they seek to avoid going to bed, but also the fantastic possibilities of dream.

Claudia Nelson's essay, 'Ethel Turner and the "Voices of Dissent": Masculinities and Fatherhood in *The Cub* and *Captain Cub*', addresses two works published during the First World War and argues for a re-reading of Turner's treatment of fatherhood. Whereas most critical work on Turner's novels emphasises the negative aspects of Turner's fathers as exemplified by Captain Woolcot in *Seven Little Australians*, Nelson demonstrates that *The Cub* and *Captain Cub* propose models of father-daughter relations which show that paternity has much in common with motherhood, and that women, like men, have a place in both private and public spheres. A particularly telling aspect of Nelson's argument is her finding that far from merely echoing British fiction of the period, Australian fictions focus on father-daughter relationships, rather than the father-son dynamics common in British texts. *The Cub* and *Captain Cub* are rarely discussed within literary-critical work in Australian literature, and Nelson's essay is thus a welcome intervention into discussions of Turner and of gender representations in the early twentieth century.

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AWARDS

Two Australians have recently been honoured by awards from the Children's Literature Association.

The 2003 Phoenix Award winner is Ivan Southall's *Long Night Watch* (Methuen, 1983). This is the first time that an Australian writer has won the Phoenix Award, which recognises books of exceptional merit published twenty years ago that did not win a major award at publication but that has been deemed worthy of special attention given the perspective of time. Past Phoenix winners are listed on the ChLA website at www.childlitassn.org

The second award has gone to our hard-working editor Clare Bradford, for her critical work *Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children Literature* (Carlton, Vic, Melbourne University Press). Clare has been awarded the Children's Literature Association Book Award which 'recognize[s] outstanding book-length contributions to children's literature history, scholarship and criticism... written in English exclusively by the author...' (ChLA website). Clare's award is for the best book in the field of children's literature for the year 2001.

In 1991, Claudia Nelson, author of the first article in this issue, received an honourable mention for this award for *Boys Will Be Girls: The Feminine Ethic and British Children's Fiction, 1857-1917* (Rutgers UP, 1991).

Clare's and Ivan's awards will be presented at the 2003 ChLA conference in El Paso in June.



EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 4)

Another rarely-canvassed aspect of literature for children is how the cultural capital constituted by Shakespeare's plays is represented and deployed in contemporary texts. In 'Shakespeare as National Discourse in Contemporary Children's Literature', Erica Hatley considers the uses made of Shakespeare in *Penny Pollard's Passport*, by Robin Klein, examining Klein's mobilisation of references to Shakespeare as cultural commodity. She argues that Klein's treatment of Penny Pollard's visit to Stratford-on-Avon allows for satirical and ironic views of the commercial uses made of the figure and works of Shakespeare, but that Penny Pollard's incorporation of Shakespeare's language into her own modes of expression also suggests a textual anxiety around notions of culture as it is embodied in contrasts between Australia and Britain. Hatley compares the specifically Australian inflections of Klein's work with the version of Shakespeare promoted by Susan Cooper, a British author who has lived for most of her life in the United States, and whose novel *King of Shadows* features an American protagonist, an adolescent boy who in a time-travel narrative finds himself in Elizabethan London, performing in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alongside Shakespeare himself.

Verse novels, exemplified by Stephen Herrick's *A Simple Gift*, have figured prominently in young adult publishing in Australia since Herrick's *Love, Ghosts and Nose Hair* (1996). Wendy Michaels selects one complex thematic strand, that of notions of home, homelessness and being at home, and discusses *A Simple Gift* in relation to representations of spatiality and the intersections of subjectivity and space in this text. She concludes that a sense of home as it is figured in *A Simple Gift* derives from and incorporates intersubjective relations which offer empathy and mutual support, and that the association of home with place is wrought through memory as the characters in the verse novel accumulate memories capable of constructing new modes of being at home.

Clare Bradford