



NATIONAL CENTRE for
AUSTRALIAN
CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE^{Inc}

BEHIND THE IMAGINED

I S S U E

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THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the third edition of *Behind the Imagined*.



**Professor Margot Hillel, Professor Belle Alderman and Bob Graham
at the opening of the *Imagine If...* exhibition**

Our first two articles were originally speeches delivered at the opening of the *Imagine If...* exhibition on July 27, 2017, at the University of Canberra. The first is by Bob Graham, who created the spectacular artwork for the exhibition's posters, who presented a speech about imagination. The second is by Professor Margot Hillel who summed up the importance of preserving children's literature for generations to come.

Speeches seem to be the theme this month as we also have three more about translations that present different perspectives: from a publisher – Angela Namoi; from an author – Libby Gleeson; and from a translator – Matthew Callaghan. These speeches were presented at the *Sharing Stories Symposium: The Art and Science of Translating & Sharing Australian Children's Stories Worldwide* held at The University of Canberra on October 11, 2018.

We follow these with a lovely story by May Gibbs' expert Jane Brummitt about an exciting discovery of an original May Gibbs' artwork that was stored in someone's garage. Finally, our third edition closes on a very high note with an insightful article by Geoffrey Burkhardt about the types of children's books selected as School Prizes from the 1880s to the 1940s.

I hope you enjoy this year's diversity of articles that reflect the 'magic' that happens behind the scenes in the world of children's literature.

Jane Carstens
Editor

Imagination

by Bob Graham

Belle asked me just a little while back to say a few short words tonight and along with that asked if I could make a poster to the title of “Imagine If...” to go along with the exhibition. Well, in spite of my daily work I probably have no more expertise or claim on Imagination than anybody else I suspect. I know that during the course of my own stories I spend quite some time staring out the window and up over the roofs opposite to somewhere in the clouds on the flight approach to Melbourne airport. And I wait for some idea to land on my drawing board!

So my imagination, indeed an important part of my work practice, is as simple or complicated as that! That’s most of what you would find were you to open my Bag of Tricks (along with other mysterious stuff involving memories of old dogs, together with small bits of paper and lots of sticky tape). It’s hard to run two-day workshops around that.



Bob Graham's artwork for the exhibition's poster

I strongly suspect that Imagination benefits greatly when hooked up to Memory and Experience -your own and shared experience with others - stories in many forms, spoken, written, sung, or even carved into rock. As I now have 74 years to draw on, does that make me potentially more imaginative than children? I have no idea although we do attribute our young with having boundless imagination. Indeed we authors for children are reliant on it.

So that is all I can contribute to the subject. When I was asked to illustrate this poster, ‘Imagine If...’, it seemed to me that the really important word was the IF. And beyond that and even more so, more important than that were the following three dots. In a rare piece of research I asked my editor Lizzie at Walker Books in London the ‘Editorspeak’ for these three dots and Lizzie told me they are called

‘ellipses’. I mean, I should have known that. I use them often. I’ve got a history of these things. Stepping stones into whatever is to come. Stepping off into that white space on the page that follows. There’s where the imagination is! That’s the space that fiction inhabits. Well, mine at least! I could have made my poster with just three very large dots. It would have meant a lot to

me, but I think maybe not coming across to the wider public.

So I'm happy to see them, these familiar dots making a guest appearance on the poster and invitations for the exhibition tonight. I would like to use that same imagination and come down from the clouds to the north of my window to think that some day and hopefully not too much into the future that the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL) might have an enhanced space of its own, a building and facilities that will accommodate its wonderful and nationally important collection where it can give access to all people to the work, the stories past, the stories here and now, and the stories to come, that will nourish the imagination of children of all ages way into the future.

The collection and those who devote so much of their time and expertise to the NCACL and the people who use this important resource deserve nothing less. Just imagine that!



The wonderful space at the University of Canberra for the *Imagine If ...* exhibition



Imagine If ...

by Professor Margot Hillel OAM

Chair, The Children's Book Council of Australia Board



Professor Margot Hillel OAM

First of all I would like to add my acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathering and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and future and thank them for their care of country.

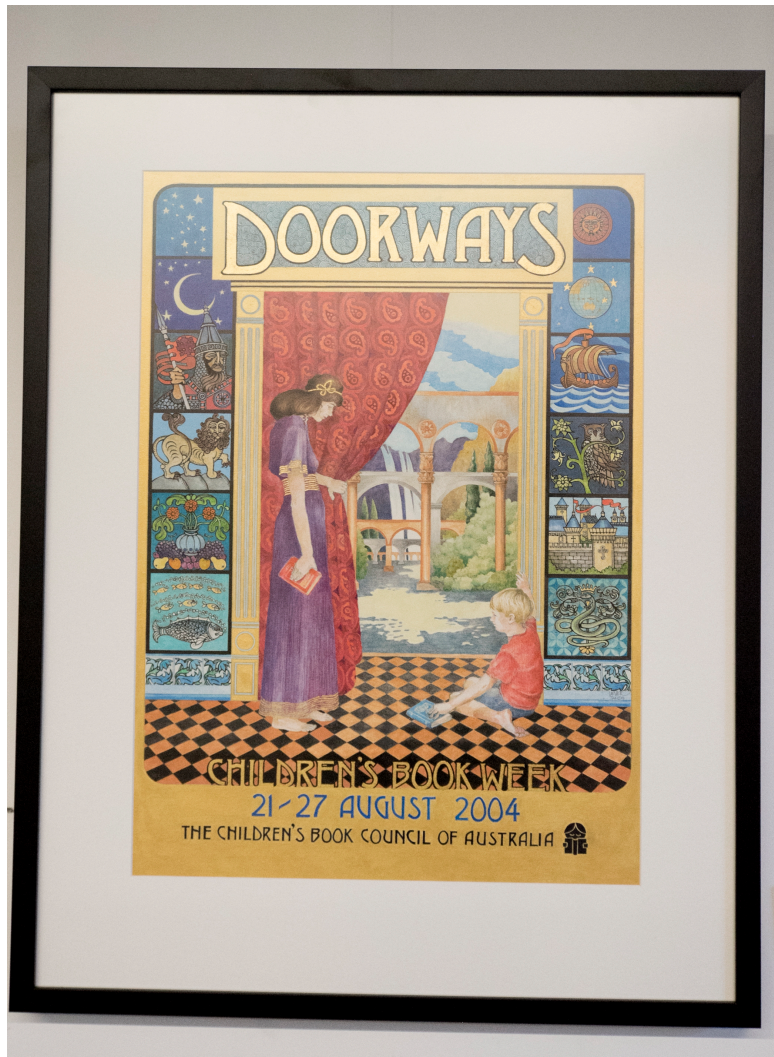
I am delighted to be here tonight. What an apposite title: *Imagine If ...*, so right for this wonderful exhibition which, like the works it celebrates, will stimulate imagination, nostalgia and joy. The three themes – Enter, Journey and Imagine – add a sense of mystery and wonder as we explore the exhibition.

I would like to congratulate my colleague Belle Alderman and all her team for their work in putting together such a remarkable exhibition. I thank them too for their invitation to be with you all tonight. It is both a pleasure and a privilege.

The exhibition showcases 40 original pieces taken from both the remarkable collection of the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL) and the works owned by the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) which the National Centre holds for us and cares for so beautifully. One of the wonderful things about the works held by The NCACL on our behalf, and something which is reflected in the exhibition, is that they document the CBCA Book Week themes in a visual way.

In all, NCACL holds around 150 pieces of the CBCA's artwork and we are so very grateful to them. The CBCA and NCACL are old friends and partners – from the days when this was the Lu Rees Archives. And what a splendid resource this is for Australia – the word National in the title of the Centre is so important as this is truly an Australian resource, one which, with over 42,000 books, original manuscripts, ephemera and illustrations, is developing into a repository and research centre to rival Seven Stories in Britain.

Children's books are the strongest sales area of Australian publishing and are such an important cultural source.



BH Lever Doorways framed artwork

Even if children come from a home where there aren't books, they encounter them in schools, in playgroups and in childcare. Books are socially and culturally of great importance, often reflecting and reinforcing contemporary societal concerns. It is really crucial both for their intrinsic worth, and for their historical and social value, that children's books, and the illustrations, dummies and preliminary working drawings, for example, are preserved. Think how much we can learn from looking at John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, intended for the Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly published in 1744 by British publisher John Newbery, after whom the Newbery Medal is named. It is sometimes

considered, wrongly in my view, the first children's book, but it was certainly entrepreneurial. It consists of simple rhymes and pictures about children's games, loosely tied to the letters of the alphabet. (See Percy Muir (1969) *English Children's Books 1600-1900* p. 65). To market the book to the children of the day (and presumably their parents), the book came with either a ball for a boy or a pincushion for a girl.

We can learn a lot about attitudes to gender and to children and childhood from the sale of this book, and indeed its contents!

The NCACL's preservation of so much important material related to children's literature will have scholars of children's literature and the history of children's literature grateful for many, many years to come – as well as providing a resource for people to revive memories. Memories are preserved in books – our own memories of childhood and what we read, and the memories of the reactions of the children we read to. I was ill a lot as a child, but was a voracious reader. The wonders of the local children's library were soon exhausted (and I suspect the librarian was too)

and she suggested that I start using the adult library. My father bought me, aged about nine, Hendrik van Loon's *The History of Mankind*, which although described as a children's book, was very long and was no doubt designed to keep me occupied for some time. I remember my daughter, Catriona, sobbing and sobbing because she'd been reading *Captain Johnno* and people were horrible to Johnno because he was deaf. My son, from an early age, loved words in a slightly different way. One day, when he was about three, I asked him what he was doing – he was very intent with a book-shaped, folded piece of paper and he told me he was writing his footnotes! A collection such as we are seeing a glimpse of tonight also indicates changes in printing and publishing techniques across the decades. It preserves the work of our well-loved and world-renowned illustrators such as Bob Graham who is here with us tonight. We all know the expression about pictures telling a 1000 words and we can see from the illustrations here tonight their importance in the narrative of the books. C.S. Lewis famously said that a children's book that was only enjoyed by children was not a good children's book, and we can see how true this is here when, as adults, we can appreciate the complexity of the illustrations and the visual jokes in many and the story they tell.



Artworks on display by Narelle Oliver, Gregory Rogers and Graeme Base

We understand too, from this exhibition that unlike Athena springing fully formed from the head of Zeus, a book takes painstaking effort to build and develop. How intriguing to be able to see how an illustrator conceives of the idea, develops it and turns it into the finished product.

I had the pleasure of listening to the lovely interview Rowan Simpkin did with Louise Maher on the ABC. In it, Louise commented on what a rare opportunity it was to be able to see all these art works. How right that is and how lucky we all are to be able to view them together on this wonderful occasion.



Translations from a publishing perspective

by Angela Namoi



Angela Namoi

Hello everyone. My role today is to talk about sharing stories from a publishing perspective. This is, of course, a two-way event – we can share stories written here for our Australian children, and we can also share our Australian stories with readers in other parts of the world.

I'd like to start by saying that I believe the most important thing a creator can do – especially in a book for children – is to ensure that it is right for the home market. In other words, our books should be accessible and relatable to in particular to the children of Australia. And by that I don't mean homogeneity of product. Certainly not! We are a country made up of many and varied identities and it's vital that children are able to recognise themselves in the books that they read – especially in their formative years. (As an aside: studies have shown that having just 10 books in the house of a pre-schooler is a better predictor of tertiary education than the education level of either parent.)

Obviously we would also like our children to read books by creators from other countries – and as many of our kids are bilingual (or better) there's a demand for translated books in Australia as well.

If our books can also find an audience outside of Australia then that's terrific – and that's the work I've been doing for the past 25 years.

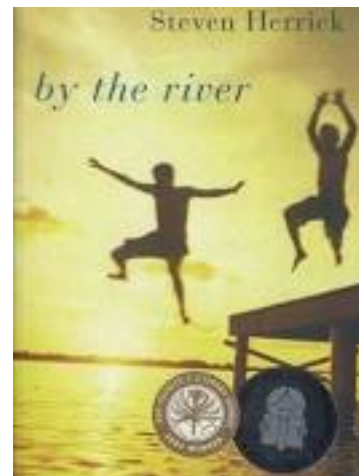
So... how do we – speaking here from an Australian publisher perspective – go about trying to achieve translations for Australian books?

- We make contact with international publishers at the various book fairs – the biggest one for children's books is the Bologna Bookfair held in March/April each year.
- We pitch the titles that we think might work for a particular publisher (we may be meeting with a picture book editor, or a YA publisher, or someone who is looking purely for middle grade novels.... It's up to us to quickly try to establish what the particular person is going to be interested in and then pitch them any projects we can offer. If a publisher is interested they'll

ask to see materials, which we'll get out to them as soon as possible after the bookfair is over. Of course we'll also aim to pitch other books too – especially those that we feel have 'good international legs'!

- What a publisher is interested in will depend on their own list and interests – for example: a publisher might be looking for a humorous picture book; or a YA contemporary novel with a strong female voice; or a middle grade fantasy trilogy, or may just ask to be shown our bestsellers, and/or our prizewinners'.

- Out of all these meetings surprisingly clear trends will emerge, and these can change quite dramatically from fair to fair. This is something to bear in mind when pitching – something that may have been 'out of fashion' two years ago will suddenly be much sought-after. We therefore need to be constantly gauging what the current interest is and if necessary pitching relevant titles from our backlist rather than our frontlist, if they seem like a better fit. We recently sold a free verse YA novel, *By the River* written by Steven Herrick, to a German publisher. The book was published by us in 2004!



- The two biggest trends to emerge from Bologna this year can be boiled down to a demand for a diversity and authenticity. These are changes that should be celebrated, despite some initial over-reach and heavy-handed political correctness... but I'm sure, in time, things will settle down and leave us in a better place.

As an example of extreme of diversity: I was told about a highly experienced African-American reviewer who is now only permitted to review books by African-American authors... a pretty extreme position to take but the attempt is well-meaning.

And an example of the authenticity issue: I had a wonderful picture book that I had high hopes for on our list – a story of how much the loss of music in the lives of Afghan children affects their well-being. The author is a well-known English-Australian who is a professional musician and broadcaster, and who taught, at great danger to himself, in an underground Afghan music school for about 18 months; and the illustrator is an Iranian-Australian who was born and educated through university level in Iran. I thought both were extremely authentically qualified to write and illustrate this book. However many international editors disagreed and argued a preference for 'local authors'... I understand this up to a point but my counter-comment would be that the book was not intended for Afghani children; its

intended market was children from the West, to give them an insight into children's lives in a war zone. A point to ponder perhaps?

- And finally there's the *looong* list of 'hurdles' that need to be overcome (my shorthand here is that for each project the interested publisher has a mental 'pro' and a 'con' column) which are different in different territories. If there are too many 'cons', a book is unlikely to find a home in that territory.

For example let's look at picture books. I think there is generally consensus that the younger the reader, the more 'right' a book has to be for that little person – it's ideal if the book can reflect back to a particular young child something that they can easily identify with. For that reason picture books can be difficult to place, despite publishers personally loving art styles/storylines etc.

Anthropo-morphism can help (and Australian animals are definitely more acceptable these days than used to be the case) but art style can be difficult.

I know from our own publishers that they can fall in love with some artwork at a bookfair only to discover when they see it back here that it all seems wrong. Ultimately we realised that the light in Europe is really very different from the light in Australia, and sometimes that has a big impact on particular pieces of art – either in the art itself, or in the way we experience the art when there are different light qualities.

A wonderful storyline is of course appealing, BUT... if it has the added richness of wonderful rhythm and rhyme (often a huge plus at home), that sadly becomes a 'con' for translation. (It can be done of course – but it's definitely an added challenge.)

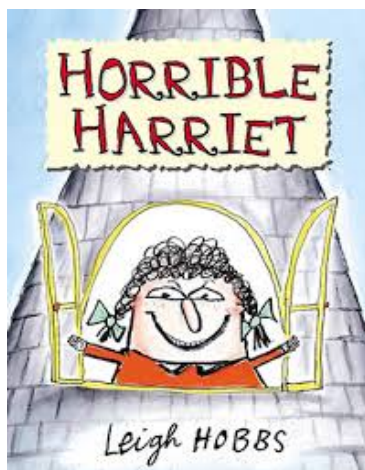
Age appropriateness can also be an issue. In some territories children are expected to be reading 'chapter books' (rather than picture books) by the age of 5 or 6, but in others – especially Scandinavia – they like picture books for older children as their kids don't tend to start school before age 7.

There can also be problems with the number of words of the page – our Australian picture books are considered 'too wordy' by many publishers, even if the age range matches.

Of course there are always books that manage to overcome ALL barriers and I guess these are the truly universal stories. The example I'd like to cite interests me on many levels. It's a picture book that is now probably 25 years old – the title is *Fox*, written by Margaret Wild and illustrated by Ron Brooks. It's a book that has sold into around 30 different languages; it has won many significant international awards; it is used around the world in schools – especially

in the first year of school – for children who perhaps have not quite settled in. And it is still in print in almost all the territories into which it has been sold. And yet, and YET parents are often very reluctant to read this with their children. Which brings me to the ‘grown up person’ factor with sharing stories. We need to explore our own barriers to particular stories and remember that children may not yet possess our degree of pessimism about the world. While parents anguish over the plight of magpie in *Fox* and worry that it will send a ‘frightening message’ to their child, children are in fact unfailingly optimistic about the ultimate outcome – which is why this is a book that does so much to help a child settle at school.

Beyond picture books things become a little easier. There are fewer (or no) illustrations and text is much easier to translate/tweak. (Going back to *Fox* for a minute – there were HUNDREDS of email exchanges over the single word – BUSH. What was this exactly? It was incredibly tricky to get it right for the many different territories.) Length of book does become an issue though. Translators are generally paid by word count, so two otherwise equally-weighted novels on other measures, but where one is 400 pages and the other 250 pages, we’d generally find that the 250 page novel has a much bigger chance of achieving a translation deal.



Middle grade fiction is the heart of children’s publishing and there seems to generally be a constant shortage of books. At this point boys and girls often want quite different stories, and trends in particular territories can be quite precise, and fast-moving, depending on what is rocketing to the top of bestseller lists in various territories. Humour is especially important for boys and that can come in very different guises in different parts of the world. Australian irony is often a problem in other markets! (*Horrible Harriet* – waiting, waiting but redemption doesn’t come.)

On the subject of boys and reading I wanted to raise an issue which provides food for thought. There is broad consensus that boys and girls really do seem to like quite different books at this stage (well girls will often read ‘boys’ books’ but boys generally won’t read ‘girls’ books’).

I do wonder if we don’t always get it quite right in our books for boys. However much we hope the world is becoming more balanced in terms of shared roles, I think it’s still pretty clear that it’s largely mothers who are the carers of young children; and it’s largely women who are pre-school teachers; librarians; school teachers and publishers... so we can only conclude that it’s largely women currently making decisions about what kids might like to read. I’ll leave it there as a point to ponder...

Young adult fiction is at a difficult point in its evolution... or perhaps devolution. Of course it's also quite new – I certainly didn't read YA fiction as a teenager – we went straight on to adult novels at about age 12. Now it's being reclaimed by the adult world (I cynically suspect largely because of the spectacular successes of Harry Potter, Twilight, the Hunger Games and John Green in crowding out the adult novels on bestseller lists in the past decade or more.) Whatever the reason it's quite difficult to achieve translations at this level.

You might ask – why not work directly with translators? It's a good question but the reason is that without a publisher a translation is generally not going to be published. But it's also because the acquiring publishers will have access to a trusted pool of translators in their territory. They will match the right translator with the right text.

Why don't we do many translations in Australia? This is the Catch-22 question. Broadly, there are difficulties establishing a solid pool of translators here because there just isn't enough work to create one, although of course the flipside of that is that if we did more translations the pool would grow.

Allen & Unwin has done some local translations – mostly from Dutch titles because we have a wonderful Dutch translator here in Australia – John Nieuwenhuizen. But in most instances we tend to partner up with a North American or UK publisher using their translators and sharing the costs.

A secondary reason is that old 'con' column again: translated books have the added challenge of absent authors (marketing and publicity often crucial factors in a book's success), and also because translated books are not eligible for big awards such as the CBCAs. (Some awards – e.g. the Inkys – do have a section for translated titles.)

Economies of scale – 3K standard printing – 5K translates to 'excellent', 10K superb bestseller in Oz. Do the maths – add in costs of translation, lack of author presence, inability to enter most awards – and it becomes a risky proposition.

For me the most interesting conundrum has to do with language as a living and evolving thing. Translation publishers tell me that sample translations from native speakers who have lived outside the country of origin for a long period of time are often using language that is 'stuck in a time period' and doesn't come across as 'quite right' to their audience. In other words, diaspora populations may end up with their own version of a language. That's not necessarily a negative if we're looking to translate books for local consumption, but it may mean they won't travel further afield.

We can see this at play when we look at how different the language is when a book is American, Canadian, English, Irish, South African, West Indian etc. I LOVE that diversity in how we use language, but for a very small child it has to be just right.

Surely the online world must be making a difference? Of course it is – especially in terms of more affordable access for educational materials in third world countries. I can see lots of opportunities for smaller translations to be achieved economically, and of course sharing the end product is far simpler, meaning we can surely improve the diversity of our offerings.

But the world of publishing does seem to move very slowly, and you may be dismayed or overjoyed to know that eBooks have not only plateaued, but have actually gone down as a percentage of the book business in recent years. Despite the many advantages in being able to access books online, it does appear that a book has an intrinsic value beyond what is the sum of its parts – and I say hooray indeed for that!



Sharing Stories – Translation

by Libby Gleeson



Libby Gleeson

Before going on to talk about the books that Freya Blackwood and I have done together I would like to say a few things about children's literature and translation. First, how it usually happens. In April every year there is the Children's Literature Book Fair in Bologna, Italy. It's a wonderful, wonderful event. Publishers of children's literature from all around the world meet there for about a week and they have nonstop meetings. Their aim is to sell the titles they are publishing to publishers from other countries so that that title will then be translated and come out in that country. Of course they are also looking for titles in those other countries to have translated into English so they can then bring that book to publication here.

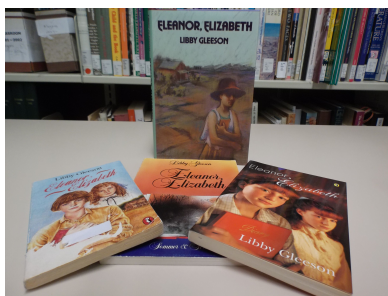
This event is a fair for publishers, not writers. I was there in 2004 and you could hardly move let alone meet your publishers from other countries. I found it overwhelming. How could any book I had written possibly compete with the thousands of works being discussed and traded in these vast halls of industry? I think the experience may be a bit better for illustrators.

Of course, over the years certain publishers will have established relationships with other publishers and be confident that certain titles will appeal to them and so on. In addition, many of the larger publishers will have an international department such that when a title is published, by say Walker here in Australia, it may also get published in the USA by that other arm of the same company, Candlewick Press. These relationships may mean that before publishing a book in the first place, deals will have been done internationally so that the costs of the book are more manageable and can go ahead.

When you write a work of fiction – be it a novel or a picture book – you fantasise international success. You want it picked up in lots of other countries and translated into other languages so that it is read by readers everywhere. Of course, some books are runaway successes, translated into lots of languages and read all over the world. I think Andy and Terry's Treehouse¹ books fit that category.

Others, however, are well supported by publishers and agents here who work hard to put Australian titles in front of their international counterparts and get some success with those they support and push forward.

Why do some get taken up and others not? I can't answer that with confidence. Occasionally there will be titles of great classic themes that speak to a universal human condition. That is a rare and beautiful thing. I wish I knew the secret of writing that. Some that may not be classic are still so rich in the writing and stunning in the visual imagery that buyers from other countries are quick to purchase them. Sometimes a work might speak to a contemporary political issue or belief system that resonates across national boundaries. Or sometimes you get lucky – a work just might grab the fancy of the publisher doing the buying for that international house.



Translations of *Eleanor Elizabeth* held at the NCACL

My first experience of translation came with my first novel, *Eleanor Elizabeth*, back in the nineteen eighties. Two years after its 1984 publication by Angus and Robertson it was published in Danish by a company called Somer and Sorensen. I was pretty thrilled but I had no way of knowing anything about the quality of the translation as obviously I don't speak or read Danish. I'll make some comments about this when Freya and I speak about the translations of our picture books.

The early novels of mine did not go on to multiple translations. Although published in Britain and America they remained only in English – with some changes in the American editions. Certain changes are expected there – Mum to Mom is the obvious one. They did also try to change reference to specific trees and vernacular expressions and other things that I'm sorry can't

¹ The Treehouse Books are written by Andy Griffiths and illustrated by Terry Denton.

remember. My literary agent at the time, Jill Hickson, had the view that you negotiated your way through that and you decided what you were prepared to compromise on. She said you determined what it was you were not prepared to see change and then give in on those things that were less significant. In those early years I was very reluctant to see anything change – precious? Probably. But I have mellowed quite a bit – again you’ll see that as Freya and I talk about *Amy & Louis*.

My first picture book in translation – in the years before I started working with Freya – was with the title *Uncle David*, illustrated by Armin Greder. The only change there was a change of title name – *Meine Onkel Harrie*. I’m not sure of the rationale.

Others such as the Hannah stories were well received and published in Spanish editions for the market in South America, and in Korean for the population in South Korea. That country has huge respect for Australia publishing and takes lots of titles.

How are these stories received in the countries where they are published? I can’t really answer that question. I don’t get feedback from the publisher as to the reception that the books receive. It’s sometimes hard enough to get information about your work here in your home country. The fact that a foreign publisher takes your next publication may be the only indication that the work has been a success for them.

Certainly I want the work I write to sell overseas – not just for the income or status but because I do think that this is a way that other countries find out that Australia is not just a land of kangaroos and koalas. The works such as *Amy & Louis* reveal small children with emotion and feelings just like any small child anywhere in the world. It’s a story that can reach out to connect and be felt anywhere. And books like *Look A Book*, with Freya’s fabulous imagery, reveal rich imaginative ideas that I hope can speak to anyone, wherever they are.

To talk specifically about one title, *Amy & Louis*, this work has been published in a large number of countries: America x 2 (English and Spanish), Finland, Germany, Japan, Korea, China, Russia, and also in Braille.

Take the American English edition of *Amy & Louis*. Remember I said how I was reluctant to change anything back with my first ever overseas editions? Well here we had a change of title and a change of cover image. It is called, in America, *Half a World Away*, which is the comment the father makes in the text as to why the girl Amy won’t hear any comment Louis makes if he tries to connect with her. I prefer the Australian English



Different translations of *Amy & Louis*

version - not just because I wrote it but because the emphasis for me is on the connection, the togetherness of the two children. The American title and image emphasises their separation.

A bigger change happens at the end of the book. In the story, Amy and her family have left. Louis is devastated and all the colour has gone out of his life. He no longer stares at the sky and sees the shapes that the clouds make. After Louis calls out to Amy colour returns and he looks up to the sky and sees 'strange sea horses and wild, wild dragons.' For me, and for the Australian publisher, that meant the reader would know that Louis was OK. His world was in some way restored. The American publisher said that the children in his country would not appreciate that. They needed to be told that Louis was all right, even happy at what he had done. That meant a new sentence: 'Half a world away, Louis slept, smiling in his dream.' Not a sentence I am proud to have written and Freya Blackman was asked to provide another illustration which does sit beautifully opposite the original ending.

The publisher was Arthur Levine, a publisher who first brought Harry Potter to the world and a publisher whose list I was very happy to join. But this change was huge and I resisted for some time. The argument he put forward was this: he knew his market, those who might buy the book would see it as vague or incomplete at the ending, and there was a need for a definitive closure to the story. It is a literal ending that he was after and he may well have been correct. The kind of inferential reading that we both teach and value may not be the same in the USA. That version of the story was published a few times – the American Spanish edition and the Finnish. I only know because of the existence of the final image, as the languages of those two countries eludes me.

One other comment I'd like to make is on the translation of *Amy & Louis* into German. I wrote *Amy & Louis* with as spare a text as I could, knowing that the illustrations would tell so much of the story. So, the opening page is 'Amy and Louis built towers as high as the sky, they dug holes deep enough to bury bears and they saw magical creatures in clouds.' The image Freya Blackman has created shows you two little children, clearly the best of friends. I don't speak German but I think that 'Lara und Leo waren die allerbesten Freunde,' probably says 'Amy and Louis were best friends.' Maybe the spare text is not the kind of writing in German publications, I don't know.

Certainly in the almost 40 years I have been publishing children's literature I have come to realise that each country or culture that takes our stories and renders them for their community of young readers does so in ways that they feel will make them accessible. We may not always like it, but I have come to accept that.



The Translation of Children's Literature – the Translator's Perspective

by Matthew Callaghan



Matthew Callaghan

Good evening everyone. It is a pleasure to be here and speak to you, and in such illustrious company! Thank you also to Belle Alderman for having invited me and for giving some visibility to the often-invisible role of the translator in the transfer of stories between cultures.

This evening I want to start by talking about translation generally, as it is something that I know many people haven't really ever thought about in great depth, and then talk about some of the specific challenges related to the translation of Children's Literature, to illustrate

(no pun-intended) what I am talking about. And then I will finish by looking at a few examples from a case study I have done of some of Freya Blackman's and Libby Gleeson's books, and another that Angela Namoi has been involved with.

When Belle asked me to speak at this event, as a person with an understanding of literary translation, she had a number of questions in mind – the constraints of translation of children's books, and the responsibilities of the translator in terms of 'faithfulness' to the author and the source text: what concessions are allowable? I will try and touch on these main points.

Let me start by saying: my perspective, as a translator and literary translation scholar, is that translation is impossible. That is exact 'word for word' transfer from one language to another with all of the meaning and form intact is simply an unattainable goal.

And yet translators do something approximating it successfully every single day. However, when we read a translation, it is important to remember we are not reading the mirror image of the original text, but 'as all translations are – another book' (Levine, 1992 (1983)) based on that text.

At the same time, translation is indispensable. It is a precondition to 'sharing stories' (on the topic of tonight's event) - and without it there would be no intercultural communication. Bassnett (2011: 95) defines the task of the translator as: "[t]o render a text written in one language into another, hence making available material that would otherwise be inaccessible. Translation is therefore a communicative activity that involves the transfer of information across linguistic

boundaries". Speaking of literary prose – but I think equally applicable to tonight's topic – Barslund describes translation as "the communication of stories between two cultures" (2011:139; my emphasis). Without translation – that is without translators – the transfer of stories between languages and cultures would be impossible. It is the only method that we have, and we have been doing it since the first languages came into contact.

As a rule, I suspect the general public does not give much thought to the nuances of translations, and probably less so in terms of children's literature. And yet so many of our children's 'Classics' are actually translations originally composed in other languages. As a student in my class this semester noted in a spectacular epiphany: studying translation,

has forced me to revisit all of the English texts I've read under the false assumption English was indeed the original source language and be [sic] absolutely dumbfounded by the fact that almost half of them are in fact translations. This was so striking to me because [it] highlighted something that I had not even considered and overlooked so blatantly ... for example, I did not realise *The Little Prince* was a French book until I read it again and found a page dedicated to more of the authors [sic] French works at the end of it (Anon.; Class Forum, LANG3001 Semester 2, 2018).

This reaction is not uncommon, and there are many more examples – everything by the Brothers Grimm (originally in German) including *Cinderella* (*Aschenputtel*), *The Frog Prince* (*Der*



German edition of *The Frog Prince*

Froschkönig), *Hansel and Gretel* (*Hänsel und Gretel*), *Rapunzel*, *Rumpelstiltskin* (*Rumpelstilzchen*), *Sleeping Beauty* (*Dornröschen*), and *Snow White*; *The Ugly Duckling* and everything by Hans Christian Andersen (originally in Danish); and the roots of *Little Red Riding Hood* can be found in the 10th century in several European folk tales, including one from Italy called *The False Grandmother* (Italian: *La finta nonna*). I would suggest few children in the West have not encountered some or all of these stories during their childhoods, and the lessons and values embedded in them.

Of course, many of us know this, intellectually at least, but few of us have really thought about what it means. These stories have all entered the West's collective consciousness to such an extent that we have forgotten that they are even translations. And they have been so moulded to our own culture and values that it is easy to imagine that they were originally created in ours, and to many it is unthinkable that they were not written originally in English. But they weren't; the original texts were different books with different words from different cultures.

And they have had significant and lasting effects on children's literature in English, having inspired countless more classic stories from children's authors writing in English.

But what is translation? Jeremy Munday (2012: 5) defines translation as the changing of an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL). Sounds simple. But it is no simple matter.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1977 (1815): 98) notes that "one does not find the exact equivalent of every word of one language in another" and "not all concepts denoted by words of one language are exactly the same as those expressed by another". Similarly Nida (2000 (1964): 1) argues that "Since no two languages are identical, [...] there can be no absolute correspondence between languages. Hence there can be no fully exact translations."

But the difficulties of translation are about more than just words. Every language delimits a different world. A person's language and their experience of and description of the world are inseparable. In the words of Edward Sapir (1956: 69 in Bassnett 1988: 13),

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached"

If every language and every culture's experience of the world is different, how can we ever 'faithfully' translate a text from one into another?

And yet we do. And as I hope I have made clear at this point, it is no simple matter.

And this is equally true in the case of children's literature. I think there is an assumption that because children's books are for children, translating them is simple – but I would argue that the role of the translator is equally important (and complex) in this genre as in the translation of poetry, prose or theatre for adult audiences.

And the people who perform this impossible and frequently thankless task are often completely invisible. For example, in the Spanish translation of *Amy & Louis* (Gleeson and Blackwood, 2006b) (which I will talk about in a few minutes), the translator's name is not even mentioned. This used to be common practise in the translation of adult prose (cf. Venuti, 1995), but has become much less acceptable in recent years. However, I think it is indicative of the general impression that the translation of children's literature, because it's for children, somehow requires less skill or knowledge.

Although rarely discussed outside of academic and professional circles, there is a quite significant literature on the translation of children's literature (e.g. Lathey, 2011, Van Coillie and Verschueren, 2014)². I want to spend a few minutes going over some of the particularly salient points mentioned in that literature which differ from the translation of other genres from adults³:

Firstly, Children's literature is literature, forming part of the canon of a language or culture, and thus cannot be translated mechanically and should be translated with things such as style and genre conventions in mind – which will often differ across languages and cultures. Having said that, children's literature can cover everything from “My First ...” toddler books to Harry Potter to young adult fiction, and all of this will imply different challenges and strategies.

Yet, this literature is for children (or young adults) and they (particularly younger children) don't have the same reading age as an adult. As a consequence, complex ideas have to be expressed simply, using simple readable syntax, while also avoiding monotonous repetitive language (Lathey, 2011: 206) – this is just as true of a translation as it is of an original – and never losing sight of the original author's agonising over every individual word. I was told once by a children's illustrator that the secret to a picture book was to keep it to no more than 32 pages. When you factor in the pictures, that doesn't leave space for many words, and every single one counts!



Translations of *Possum Magic* held at the NCACL

There is often an assumption that children have less capacity to assimilate the unfamiliar, and that, because these books are for children, the cultural context has to be adapted to make it familiar to them. Take, for example, Mem Fox's *Possum Magic* (Fox, 1991). How does one begin to translate Hush and Grandma Poss' journey across Australia, meeting a host of wombats, kookaburras, dingos, emus and koalas in the 'bush'; eating Anzac biscuits in Adelaide, Minties in Melbourne, vegemite sandwiches in Darwin

and lamington in Hobart (I have intentionally left out Pavlova in Perth, as everyone knows Pavlova is a NZ invention).

Or another of my daughter's favourites, Pamela Allen's *Waddle Giggle Gargle* (Allen, 1996) where Jonathan, Grandma and Grandpa build an elaborate contraption to avoid being swooped by a magpie – 'the biggest and best magpie scarer in the whole world'. How do you make these relevant and accessible to an audience that has never been to the Aussie bush, eaten Vegemite or

² See Lathey (2012) for a brief history of the field

³ For a discussion of these points see Lathey (2012) from which I have drawn heavily

been swooped by a Magpie - all immediately familiar parts of Australian childhood (and adulthood for that matter)?

Yet, this is the job of the translator. Admittedly, this is also one of the factors that influence how and what texts are selected for translation. I don't know if these two examples have been translated (as far as I know they haven't) but unfortunately, I suspect that these types of books are often not selected because there is an assumption that they won't sell, yet I would argue these are precisely the types of books we should be translating if we want to successfully share our stories and achieve meaningful cultural exchange.

As a result, there is often a tendency towards what is called 'Domestication' (Venuti, 1995) in Translation Studies: 'cultural context adaptation' and 'localisation' (Lathey, 2011: 202) – moving the story towards and making the text familiar to the 'domestic' cultural context of the target language. Much more so than with adult literature, 'translators and editors [of children's literature] localise names, coinage, foodstuffs, intertextual references or even the settings' (Lathey, 2011: 202) as well as measurements (e.g. kilograms to pounds); for example in the translations of food in Spanish, French and German translations of Harry Potter (Lathey, 2011: 204).

The downside of this is, of course, that it removes challenge and curiosity from children's reading (Lathey, 2011: 203), and children are nothing if not curious. Additionally, such a global domesticating strategy can end up "compromising the integrity of the source text" (Lathey, 2011: 202). If you are going to turn vegemite into marmalade, the Aussie 'bush' into forest, and magpies into crows, it raises the question: why bother translating at all?

Children's literature is often didactic (Lathey, 2011: 200-1). It is one of the first ways we socialise and teach children about the values and morals of our societies. What is acceptable for children differs from culture to culture, with an often-cited example being the omission of the heel and toe mutilation of Cinderella's step-sisters in English translations (Lathey, 2011: 201).

Similarly, as with those 'My First ...' books, children's literature is often a key part of early literacy and numeracy. As a result, there is often an emphasis on standard over non-standard language in children's literature – what is considered 'good' and 'bad' use of language. This too can differ from one language to another; for example Hagrid's non-standard English dialect which is flattened in French, German and Spanish translations (Lathey, 2011: 207).

Children's stories are often meant to be 'performed' i.e. read out loud (not unlike poetry and theatre in many ways), hence the importance of gesture, intonation, rhythm, sound effects, pauses, interaction (Lathey, 2011: 206; citing Oittinen 2000). An example of this is *Donde Viven los Monstruos* (Sendak, 2009), the Spanish translation of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak and

Schickele, 1963), one of my favourite books as a child and beautifully illustrated, but the text of which just falls flat in Spanish.

On a similar note, children learn the phonology (the sounds) of a language through being read to, hence the importance of sound in children's literature – repetition, rhyme, onomatopoeia, wordplay and nonsense (Lathey, 2011: 206), all of which present challenges for the translator and, again, cannot be translated mechanically. An example of this is *Ten Little Dinosaurs* (Brownlow and Rickerty, 2015), one of my daughter's favourites, but one that both my wife and I have found to be impossible to translate simultaneously – we can translate the words but they lose their 'poetry', at least in terms of rhyme and metre:

Ten little dinosaurs, walking in a line,

Stomp goes diplodocus,

Now there are...

Nine. Even if you have never read this book, you nonetheless can participate in its performance, and this is part of what makes it so appealing to children.

Pictures! In the modern picture book, the artwork is often as important as the words in terms of the meaning and the commercial success of the book, acting as "a third dimension to the translation act between 2 languages" (Lathey, 2011: 208; citing Bell 1985). Illustration can be regarded as a form of translation in itself: Jakobsen (1959 (2000)) defined three types of translation, one of which he termed 'intersemiotic translation' or translation between different sign systems, in this case, between a written or verbal sign system and a visual one. Pictures place enormous constraints on the translator. In other genres, where a linguistic or cultural meaning cannot be translated, the translator can search for an equivalent which carries a similar meaning or connotations in the target language (the famous example being an interpreter who replaced 'Cricket' with the 'Tour de France' for a French speaker (Vinay and Darbelnet, 2000 (1958/1995): 91); when there is a picture involved, one cannot simply replace a 'line' of dinosaurs ("ten little dinosaurs walking in a line") with another formation in Spanish that rhymes with 'nueve' [nine]. Pictures also often restrict the available space. And given the importance of pictures to the purchasing of books for publication and translation, and the cost of producing them, there is usually little scope (or appetite) for recommission – you have to work with what you've been given.

Another pertinent consideration regarding the translation of children's literature is the question of the source text – especially with so-called classics. As these are 'abridged', 'adapted' and recreated time and time again and we lose track of the 'original', what does this mean for the translation of more modern books? Do, or should translators have license to recreate in

translations of more recent books? What do they take as a source text and what loyalty do they have to the source text? I will come back to this point when I discuss *Amy & Louis*.

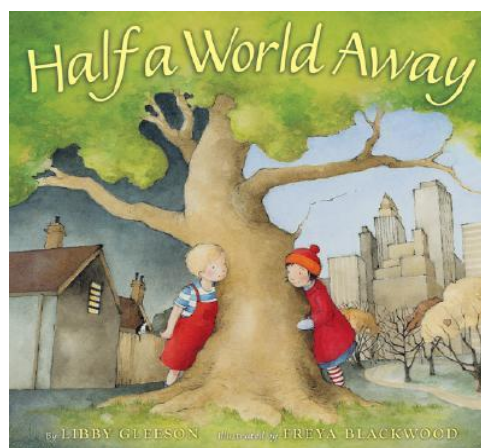
So, what does a translator do with these seemingly insurmountable challenges? The answer: their best! As Edith Grossman (2010: 71) says, “the meaning of a passage can almost always be rendered faithfully in a second language, but its words, taken as separate entities, can almost never be. Translators translate context.”

There will be certain elements where something is lost, and others where there might be gains. Gabriel García Márquez has famously said that there are parts of Gregory Rabassa’s translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (García Márquez, 1970) which are better than the original (Lowe and Fitz, 2007: 146). There are no right answers (though there may well be wrong ones!), and there are rarely definitive translations.

Now I will turn to one of Libby’s and Freya’s books, and if I have time to Margaret Wild’s *Fox* (2005b).

Amy & Louis (Gleeson and Blackwood, 2006b) requires no introduction. As Libby has already spoken at length about *Amy & Louis*, I will try not to repeat anything that she has said and focus instead on some of the areas she didn’t touch upon, particularly in relation to the Spanish translation.

As Libby already mentioned, the US English version was titled *Half a World Away* (Gleeson and Blackwood, 2006c), has a different cover image and an additional page, to cater to an audience whom the editor deemed intolerant of uncertainty. Similarly, there are the almost obligatory changes from sandpit → sandbox and Mum → mother/mom, that Libby’s already mentioned.



US English version of *Amy & Louis*

What you may not be aware of is that the Spanish version, *Al otro lado del mundo* (Gleeson and Blackwood, 2006a) [*On the other side of the world*] is actually based on the American version, last page inclusive. The

American version is in itself a translation, what Jakobson (1959 (2000): 114), whom I mentioned before, has termed “intralingual translation” – or “rewording”: an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language – meaning the Spanish version is, in effect, a translation of a translation.

Amy and Louis become Amy and Louie in American English who become Ana y Luís in Spanish (and Lara & Leo in German etc.). Name changes are sometimes necessary. One clear example is the book *Macca the Alpaca* (Cosgrove, 2018b) and the sequel *Alpacas with Maracas* (Cosgrove, 2018a). As my wife's name is Maca, short for Macarena, I was very surprised once I got the book home to discover that Macca is actually a male. Obviously, were this to be translated into Spanish, either the gender or the name would have to be changed. Maraca, on the other hand, as well as a musical instrument, is an unsavoury word used colloquially, in Chile at least, to designate a particular type of loose woman. As you can imagine, these books translated into Spanish without obligatory name changes would indeed be very different books.

However, name changes are not always necessary, but are often made, in the 'interests' of adapting the cultural context. Not only do Amy's and Louis's names change, but in effect, they are also transported from Australia to America.

Libby talked about the importance of "Cooee" to the story, not only in terms of rhyming with Louis (something the American audience may not have realised with the original spelling), but also as an emblematic Australian word; and not insignificantly, my daughter's favourite part of the book. Amy calls to Louis using the special word her mum taught her: cooe. It is not a word that any mum in any part of the world would teach her child; it is a special Australian word that only an Australian mum would teach her daughter.

The Australian National Dictionary (2nd Ed.) dedicates a full page to Cooee and its numerous uses, with written examples going back at least as far as 1790. From 'guwi' in the Sydney language gawi, meaning 'come here', cooe was:

originally a call by an Aboriginal person to communicate (with someone) at a distance; later adopted by settlers and now widely used as a signal, esp. in the bush; the name given to the call.

The US version has simply borrowed this word as if it were common to both cultures. While this word is in the Merriam Webster dictionary (of American English), and may even carry some limited currency in the US, it is listed as 'chiefly Australian' and defined merely as 'a cry to attract someone or give warning'. While this is certainly, pragmatically, what it means, and this is largely successful in the American version, there is so much more to the word and so many associations that Australians have when they say or hear 'cooe' which are neither captured in this definition nor in the American version of *Amy & Louis*. Something is lost. Translation is not just a seamless transfer, but rather something is always lost.

Similarly, the "Cooee" is translated as "Ooo-ii" in the Spanish. This isn't even a recognisable Spanish word, but rather seems to be a phonetic approximation of the cooe from the original, perhaps intended to maintain the rhyme with Luís. However, it seems to me the standard Spanish

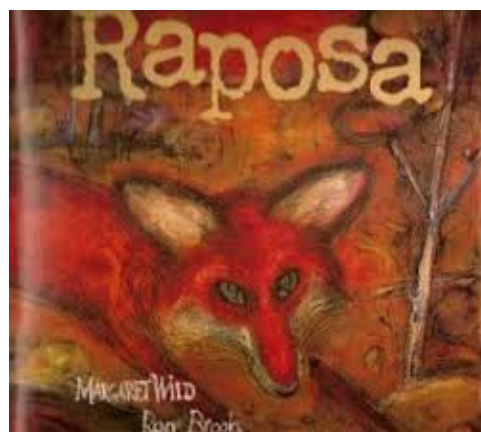
oye [hey/listen], or even better, the colloquial⁴ form oí [hey/listen] used across much of Latin America would have worked just as well: “Ooye/Oíiii Luís”; in either case, the uniquely Australian meaning of cooe would have been lost.

You might think: ‘well, this kind of loss is inevitable’, and you would be right to a certain extent, but these losses combined with the systematic erosion of everything Australian in the story cause the book to become uprooted from its source culture. For the reader of the Australian book, the implication is that Amy has moved from suburban Australia to a nondescript American city, probably New York. However, for the American reader, apart from the title, any explicit link to Australia is gone, and she could merely be moving across the US. I’m surprised they didn’t change the side of the road the cars drive on (e.g. p. 15 US), but perhaps they were constrained by the images.

Let me turn now to *Fox* (Wild and Brooks, 2005b). Probably the most striking feature of *Fox* is the beautiful but dark illustrations by Ron Brooks, and the haunting non-linear hand-etched text.

Unlike *Amy & Louis, the American* (Wild and Brooks, 2001) and Australian English versions of *Fox* are identical. This is probably due, as much as anything, to the fact that the handwritten text is so integral to the book that to change it would irremediably lessen its appeal, despite the foreignness of some of the references.

Surprisingly perhaps, then, (despite, I understand, Brooks offering to etch in other languages) the Spanish version is typed, and, I would argue, worse for it. I mentioned earlier how in picture books the



Portuguese translation of *Fox*

artwork is often as important as the words in terms of the meaning and the commercial success of the book. This is a clear case where the words and the artwork are inextricably intertwined; the disturbing, almost demented text most definitely contributes to the effect of the book, and without it, despite the valiant effort of the translator, the translation falters.

The fox itself also presents difficulties for a translator. While foxes are near universally known, and their associations of being ‘cunning’ and ‘tricksters’ also seem to be widespread, the fox’s eyes seem to be of particular importance in *Fox*. In early drafts, there was correspondence between Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks⁵ regarding the adjectives used to describe the fox’s eyes, including ‘beautiful, terrible’; later ‘dead’, ‘ice-cold’ and ‘beautiful, piercing’. Eventually, they settled upon ‘haunted’, translated fairly literally as ‘embruados’ in Spanish. The importance of the

⁴ Voseo – a non-standard oral form of singular ‘you’ used in many countries in South America

⁵ Presented by the NCAAL at the University of Canberra during the Sharing Stories programme

eyes is exemplified by the golden, glowing eyes on the cover of *Raposa* (Wild and Brooks, 2005a) the Portuguese version of *Fox* (but not the English or Spanish). While I do not know how ‘haunted’ was translated in the Portuguese edition, (as I don’t speak Portuguese and because it was inside a glass display cabinet!), clearly the translator’s choice and the associations in the target culture with those choices can have a significant impact on how this character, and the book, is perceived.

Similarly, the translation of Magpie as Urraca is problematic in itself. Urraca is the Peninsular Spanish word for the Northern Hemisphere magpie. They are actually a completely different species, and as anybody who has had contact with Southern Hemisphere magpies will know, they are very different birds. The associations that people in Spain have with Urracas and Australians have with Magpies are totally different – primarily, in Europe, they don’t swoop. Similarly, Dog, Fox and Magpie run past ‘Coolibahs’, ‘Stringybarks’ and ‘Yellowbox’ trees – like Cooee, all inherently Australian: instantly familiar and loaded with associations which are inevitably lost in translation.

I have spent a lot of time talking about losses, but before I finish I would like to give an example of where there can also be gains. In the Spanish version of *Fox*, *Zorro* (Wild and Brooks, 2005b), there is notable alliteration which is not present in those same passages in the source text. For example, the /r/ (spelt as rr) and /p/ bolded in the following sentences:

- **P**erro corre entre los matorrales con Urraca en su lomo [Dog runs through the scrub with Magpie on his back]
- Zorro le susurra a Urraca [Fox whispers to Magpie]
- Zorro corre tan rápido [Fox runs so fast]
- Puñado de **p**lumas [Fistful of feathers]

As I said earlier, translation is no simple matter. I have given a number of examples of the sorts of decisions that translators wrestle with and agonise over, and which, probably don’t even enter the mind of most readers of translations, especially of children’s literature, and particularly of more fluent translations. We are painfully aware of every word and every comma that the author laboriously selects, and, conversely, our duty, sometimes, to completely abandon them in order to, paradoxically, stay true to them.

I fear that I have probably raised more questions than I have provided answers – perhaps there will be time for that in the discussion. But I do not wish to be negative, or to make you all despondent. As I say to my students, we translate successfully all the time. You just need to be aware that you are not reading Libby Gleeson’s *Amy & Louis* or Margaret Wild’s *Fox* when you read the American or the Spanish, (or the German or Chinese for that matter) translations, but rather a different book in a different language for a different culture.

This symposium and this ‘festival’ is about celebrating the transfer of stories between cultures. But stories are not unbound particles which can be transferred easily and mechanically across merely linguistic boundaries. They are not created, reproduced and absorbed in a cultural vacuum. Rather, they are the product of, and perpetuate deeply engrained cultural values – both explicitly, for example, in terms of the Australian references in *Amy & Louis* and *Fox*, or ‘morals’ in many classic children’s stories; but also implicitly in terms of what one of my colleagues (Sadow, 2018) refers to as ‘invisible culture’, such as the lack of tolerance of uncertainty leading to an extra page at the end of the American version of *Amy & Louis*.

What is the solution, you ask? How do we successfully negotiate the transfer of foreign cultures and stories across the language divide? That is a difficult question, which probably has no absolute answers, but if you will permit me, I will hazard a few.



English and Arabic edition of *My Two Blankets*

By presenting them to our children not as local, universal stories, but as Australian stories, and American stories and Chilean stories and Chinese stories. By adding a word about the special “Australian word (cooe) [Amy’s] mum taught her”, by making it explicit that Amy has travelled from Australia to the US.

By making it clear that it is a translation. By acknowledging the translator. By publishing the English and the Spanish in parallel (like I was pleased to see of one of Freya’s books – *My Two Blankets* (Kobald and Blackwood, 2014) in Farsi, Arabic and Dari).

By giving our children the benefit of the doubt and the opportunity to exercise their curiosity and to learn something about the rest of the world, and how different cultures see the world; what we share and what makes us different.

You might not agree with these suggestions; I’m not even sure that I would necessarily follow all of them. My aim has merely been to highlight the role of the translator in intercultural exchange and the sharing of stories; and to dispel the idea that literary translation is an invisible and mechanical practise. By recognising what is different in translation, we allow what is truly universal to shine through.

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- WILD, M. & BROOKS, R. 2005b. Zorro (Fox), Caracas, Venezuela, Ediciones Ekaré.



Tracking the provenance of a painting by May Gibbs

by Jane Brummitt

Some time after reading an illustrated article written by Karen Hardy of The Canberra Times (Friday 12 May 2017) about the gift of a 1915 May Gibbs' watercolour to the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL), a Sydney couple contacted her, having recognised that an original watercolour by May Gibbs was 'hanging in grandfather's shed'. The owners wanted Professor Belle Alderman at the NCACL to see their painting.



Jane Brummitt, Geoff Turville and Amanda Turville holding their May Gibbs' paintings

Image Copyright The Canberra Times

Signed but not dated, the watercolour featured a laughing kookaburra descending to earth from a deep blue, star-studded sky. In its claws was a peacefully sleeping newborn baby securely held in a

baby wrap. A similar painting features on page 23 of *May Gibbs: More Than a Fairy Tale*, by Robert Holden and Jane Brummitt. But this painting is unique. It is accompanied by a memorable poem.

The inspiration for the works were May's much loved brother Harold, ten years younger than she was, born in Australia and creatively considered by May to be delivered by kookaburra.

Regarding her own birth, May Gibbs wrote that on 17 January 1877 she was delivered by Dr Stork in England. After coming to Australia from England in 1881, as a four year old, May later became a very patriotic Australian and inspired this pride in others.

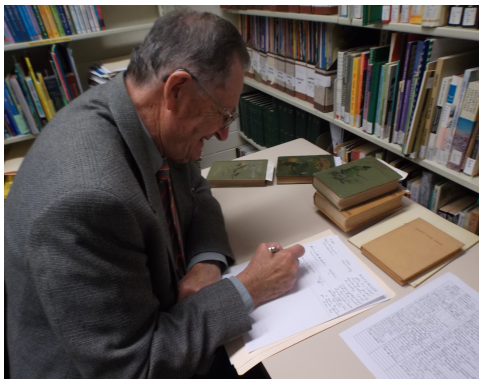
Her idea was also the inspiration behind the baby health poster she generously created for use by the Department of Public Health in New South Wales. It depicted not only Dr Stork bringing newborns but for babies born in Australia, a kookaburra.

May had already personified kookaburras in her postcards for the diggers during the first World War and in *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot* which was first published just over one hundred years ago, just after the Armistice in 1918 - and in print ever since.



Children's Books Selected as School Prizes 1880s-1940s

by Geoffrey Burkhardt



Geoffrey Burkhardt

During our book collecting or book handling experiences, no doubt most of us have encountered children's books awarded as school prizes, the large majority of which contain a school prize bookplate or prize inscription. The incidence of school prize bookplates raises a number of bibliographic questions. What categories of children's books were commonly awarded as school prizes? To what extent were children's books by Australian authors selected as school prizes during the period under review? Are there qualities or

characteristics of some children's books which favour their selection as school prizes? To what extent do the physical characteristics of school prize bookplates differ among different types of schools? These questions are the focus of this paper. Examples are chosen from a sample of children's books containing prize bookplates or prize inscriptions held in children's book collections, in particular, The National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL) which has one of the largest collections of Australian children's books containing school prize bookplates and prize inscriptions, the National Library of Australia, the Australian National Museum of Education, and smaller private collections of Australian children's books.

Books presented to school students as school prizes for academic achievement, sporting prowess or exemplary attendance or conduct, most often contain prize bookplates or prize inscriptions which include significant information about the provenance of the book, and also something about the recipient, and the school as donor of the prize. Books containing prize bookplates are most usually popular children's and teenager's stories, although it is not uncommon to find non-fiction titles bearing prize bookplates. This brief exploration of juvenile books containing school prize bookplates focuses mainly upon those books from the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century, most popular as school Speech Day prizes. Examples exemplifying the variety of juvenile books with prize bookplates and prize inscriptions have been selected for comment.

The Contribution of a School Prize Bookplate to the Provenance of a Book

Most prize bookplates contain the name of the prize winner, the name and location of the school, the date of the presentation of the book, the student's class or grade, the subject or proficiency in which the student excelled, and the name or signature of the school headmaster and/or class teacher. Sometimes the academic qualifications of the headmaster or teacher are included. In some cases the name of the presenter of the prizes is included on the bookplate. A good example of the above is evident in the prize bookplate awarded to student R. L. Howarth, a student of Scotch College, Melbourne, who in December 1915 was awarded first prize in Form 5A (Science), for 'General Excellence'. The book was presented by Major General J.W. McCay, C.B, M.A., and at the bottom of the bookplate is the signature of the school principal, 'W. S. Littlejohn M.A.'. This prize bookplate also tells us that the school was founded in 1851. The title of the book is *The Story of Hiawatha*, adapted from Longfellow by Winston Stokes. It was published by Headley Brothers, London and contains a colour frontis, and numerous colour plates. Like many school book prizes from the 19th and early 20th centuries this book is a deluxe edition, in a Scotch College full red morocco binding, the front cover of which bears a gilt impression of the college badge.

Schools which attach prize bookplates to books chosen for Prizes

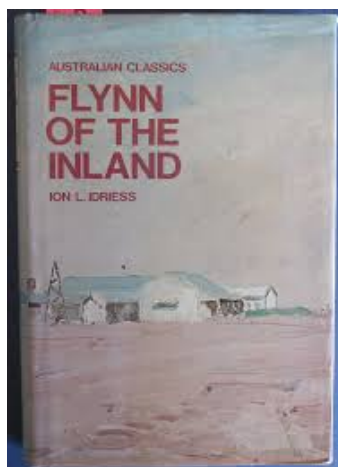
From the sample selected, the majority of school prize bookplates appear to have been awarded by secondary schools rather than primary schools. Large grammar schools and large private or church schools appear more commonly to carry on this tradition of attaching attractive bookplates to book prizes. While this tradition appears to be most widely practised during the second half of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century, prize bookplates still appear in children's books well into the twentieth century and even today examples may be seen.

The category of books presented as school prizes to boys during the later decades of the nineteenth century usually included adventure stories by G.A. Henty, W. H. G. Kingston, James Grant, Alexander MacDonald, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jules Verne, Frederick Marryat, Rider Haggard Herbert Strang and R.M. Ballantyne, usually editions in pictorial cloth bindings with attractive and enticing covers and pictorial cloth spines and front covers.ⁱ By the turn of the

twentieth century, books by Australian authors such as Ethel Turner, Ernest Favenc, and Arthur Ferres begin to appear in school book prize lists. This is particularly evident among selected children's books held in the rare book section of the NCACL.

Some of the well-illustrated boys' stories are in quarto size. An example by James Grant is *British Battles on Land and Sea* (1899). Also common are non-fiction collections of heroic epics such as *The English in Egypt with the Life of General Gordon and Other Pioneers of Freedom*, my copy of which contains the following inscription on the front free endpaper, 'Awarded to Reginald. H. Harris for highest average marks, signed H. Oliver, Headmaster, Campbelltown Grammar School and Commercial College, Xmas 1897'.

Other popular book prizes during the mid and later nineteenth century include English Public School sagas such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes and schoolboy stories by Frederic Farrar. At this time Mrs Henry Wood began to charm the teenage clientele with stories like *East Lyne* (1861) and *The Channings* (1862) among her prolific output. Many of the late nineteenth century boys' books which became candidates for school prizes emphasized traits of 'manliness' and 'Britishness' of its boy heroes. G.A. Henty wrote over seventy such books, many containing historical tales with titles such as *Under Drake's Flag*, *In the Hands of the Malays*, *By Conduct and Courage*, *A Story of the Days of Nelson*, and *With Kitchener in the Soudan*. In similar vein Herbert Strang's titles include *Boys of the Light Brigade*, *In the Grip of the Mullah* and *A Hero of Lucknow*. W. H. G. Kingston, like Henty, was a well-known author of boys' books popular as school prizes. Notable amongst his stories were *In the Eastern Seas: A Tale for Boys* (1879), *Peter the Whaler* (1851), and *Adventures in Australia* (1885).



Not all school prize books are what we would normally term 'children's books'. Items of adult fiction and non-fiction containing school prize bookplates may often be found. Books by Charles Dickens have always been popular as school prizes. Similarly, books relating to wartime adventures and experiences have been deemed appropriate school prizes, for example Donald MacDonald's *How We Kept the Flag Flying*, the Siege of Ladysmith Through Australian Eyes (1900). By the mid-twentieth century, Australian secondary schools were awarding as prizes books by Ion L. Idriess, an example being *Flynn of the Inland* and also Frank Clune, Henry Lawson and A.B. Paterson.

A School's Book Prize List

Most useful evidence of the categories and titles of books which schools present to prize winners may be found in a school's Prize List for its Annual Speech Day.

We are fortunate in locating such a list containing the titles of the books to be presented as prizes for the Prize Day of the Mowbray House School, Sydney, for the year 1924. In total, 72 prizes were awarded to students on that occasion. This private preparatory school's archive, now in the Australian National Museum of Educationⁱⁱ in the University of Canberra, contains prize lists over a number of years. The List contains the name of each student receiving a prize, the title of the book to be received by the prize winner, the class/grade of the student, and the academic discipline in which the student excelled. The following examples have been extracted from the Price List of the Mowbray House School for 1924:

At the junior primary level, 2nd Class, the following books were selected as prizes: The Jungle Book (Kipling), Robinson Crusoe (Defoe), Black Beauty (Sewell), The Boys' King Arthur, Dr. Dolittle's Post Office (Hugh Lofting). From the 3rd Class prize winners: Westward Ho (Kingsley), Children's Book of Discovery, Captains Courageous (Kipling), Land and Sea Tales, Tom Brown's School Days (Hughes), Lamb's Troy and Greece, Kidnapped (Stevenson), The Three Musketeers (Dumas). From the 4th Class list, the following titles were awarded: The Wonder Book of Science, Ivanhoe (Walter Scott), Boys' Annual, Jock of the Bushveldt, Lorna Doone (Blackmore), Children of the New Forest (Marryat), Characters from Dickens.

Some of the above titles were children's editions and adaptations for younger children. All of the Mowbray House School book prizes would have contained the School's prize bookplate or a prize inscription.

Non-Fiction Juvenile Books

Not all nineteenth century school book prizes were chosen from the heroic fiction category. For example, W. McClelland, a student at Brighton Grammar School Victoria, according to the prize bookplate, received as his prize for Dux of Classics *The Aeneid of Virgil*, translated into English Verse by John Conington, 8th edition, Longmans Green, London 1888. This is a very handsome copy in full red morocco binding with marbled endpapers and edges.

Accounts of the achievements of the famous seafaring explorers such as James Cook and William Dampier were also familiar as school prize books. For example D. Lang Purves' *Captain Cook's Voyages Round the World* proved to be a popular choice as a school prize. My copy of a later edition carries a Sunday School prize bookplate, thus: 'Broseley Church Sunday School, Prize Awarded to Percy Justone for Regularity and Good Conduct, January 1905'. Not all books awarded as school prizes necessarily contained printed prize bookplates. Many contained manuscript inscriptions. One of my best examples of a non-fiction school prize containing a written inscription is titled *Germany* by the well known historian S. Baring-Gould published in 1889 by T. Fisher Unwin, London, third edition. Inscribed on the front free endpaper is 'Minnie Blaxland, Special Prize, French Medallist in the Senior Examination, Christmas 1895.'

Normanhurst, Ashfield'. This book is beautifully bound in full gilt tooled tree calf, with marbled endpapers and gilt edges. It is believed that Minnie Blaxland was a descendent of the Gregory Blaxland family. Another Australian school book prize inscription is contained in the popular non-fiction title, *A Voyage in the 'Sunbeam', Our Home on the Ocean for Eleven Months*, by Mrs Brassey, published by Longmans Green in 1881. The prize inscription reads, 'Presented to Alfred E. Simpson head boy of Form III as a reward for his excellent conduct and writing diligence, (Signed) I. Martin, Prince Alfred College, Oct. 4th 1881'.

Scientifically oriented non-fiction juveniles were also selected by schools for Speech Day presentations during the early twentieth century, especially if they contained attractive pictorial cloth covers. An example is a book titled *The Wonders of Modern Electricity* by Charles R. Gibson, published by Seeley, Service & Co., London 1914. Its cover and spine depicts an illustration of a suspended electric railway. This book contains a prize bookplate of Sydney High School, naming the recipient as Ivan S. Turner, who received the prize for Maths II, when he was in 3rd Year in 1918. Significantly, an Ivan S. Turner was later a most distinguished NSW educational administrator, his career culminating in his Principalship of Sydney Teachers' College 1951-1967.

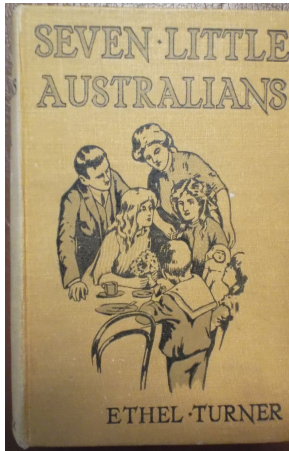
School Prize Bookplate Design

Comparing late nineteenth century and early twentieth century school prize bookplates with those from more recent decades, it appears that the heyday for elaborately ornamented and decorated school prize bookplates extended from the latter decades of the nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century. They are larger in size than later twentieth century examples, they generally use colour in their decoration, they usually contain a depiction of the school shield or coat of arms, and even the school motto in some cases, and they often cite the name of the presenter of the prizes who is usually the school's distinguish guest at the Speech Day prize giving.

Australian Authors' Books as School Prizes

Although there were some Australian children's books popular as school prizes during the last decades of the nineteenth century, Australian authored and published children's books became much more popular as school prizes during the early twentieth century. Books by Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce featured prominently as book prizes.ⁱⁱⁱ Also among the later nineteenth century children's book authors was notable historian Ernest Favenc whose adventure stories for boys were often based around events in Australian history. A good example is *Marooned on Australia*, being the narration by Diedrich Buys of his discoveries and exploits in Terra Australis Incognita about the year 1630. The first edition was published in 1896 by Blackie & Sons. My copy, a later edition, contains a prize bookplate awarded by Tenterfield Superior Public School to Stephen Crabb for 'General Proficiency' in 1908. Other boys' books by Favenc include *The Secret of the Australian Desert* (1896) based upon the disappearance of Ludwig Leichhardt, and

Tales for Young Australians (1900), a quarto sized book with an attractive pictorial cover and containing short stories by Favenc and James and Josephine Fotheringham.

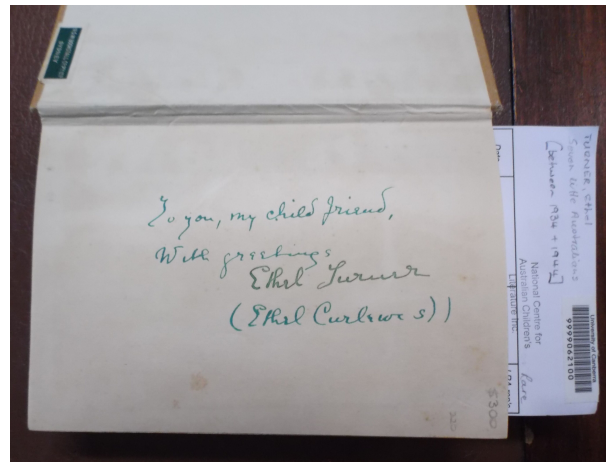


Louise Mack was author of two particularly popular stories for girls, often selected by schools as prizes for female students of the school. Her first book, *Teens: A Story of Australian Schoolgirls*, was first published in 1897 by Angus & Robertson. Her second book titled *Girls Together: A Story of Girl Life in Australia* followed in 1898, also with Angus & Robertson. Chosen from the selected sample, it contains a prize bookplate from an English school, St. Andrew's Watford. By the first decades of the twentieth century, girls' stories by Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce dominated the market for Australian girls' books, commencing in 1894 with the notable and most popular *Seven Little*

Australians, a book quite regularly awarded as a school prize for girls. The NCACL holds a very rare special copy of this title inscribed by Ethel Turner and awarded as a school prize at St. George Girls' High School.

This title went through many editions and reprints and surviving copies of many of Turner's books contain school prize bookplates in various sizes and designs. Over the early decades of the twentieth century Australian children's books by May Gibbs, Constance Mackness, Ida Rentoul Outhwaite, Harold Gaze, Dorothy Wall, Norman Lindsay, Jean Curlewis, Isabel Peacock, Ethel Pedley, Donald MacDonald

and Mrs Aeneas Gunn were all candidates as school book prizes. For further details of this group of authors, refer to Heather Scutter 'Children's Literature' chapter 17 of Lyons and Arnold (eds.) *A History of the Book in Australia 1891-1945*,^{iv} and also, Stella Lees and Pam Macintyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Children's Literature*.^v



Copy of *Seven Little Australians* inscribed by author Ethel Turner that is held at the NCACL *Seven Little Australians*

Conclusion

Representative examples of children's books containing prize bookplates and inscriptions selected from the repositories cited above lead to the following conclusions:

1. School prize bookplates appear to be most common in books awarded by secondary schools rather than those by primary schools.

2. In the total sample of school book prizes examined, there were more fiction books than non-fiction books. Most popular prizes were boys' adventure stories from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.
3. By the early twentieth century the popularity of children's books by Australian authors selected as school prizes is evidence of the acceptance of this genre of children's literature by schools and parents.
4. In the large majority of cases the books chosen for prizes were well bound, often deluxe copies with attractive coloured pictorial cloth covers. Some nineteenth century prize books awarded by prestigious grammar schools were bound in calf or half calf bindings.
5. The largest and most decorated prize bookplates were found in books awarded by large private schools during the second half of the nineteenth century.
6. Prize bookplates in books awarded by schools after the 1930s were smaller, less decorated and less detailed in the information they contained.
7. The provenance of a children's book is enhanced by a school prize bookplate or prize inscription in which is included the date and grade (or class) level of the named recipient, the type of achievement which earned the student the award, the name of the school and the name of the headmaster or headmistress.

ⁱ For a detailed exposition of this category of children's literature refer to H.M. Saxby, *A History of Australian Children's Literature 1841-1941*, Wentworth Books, Sydney 1969, Chapter 2, "Early Period to 1900, Boys' Adventure Story"

ⁱⁱ Mowbray House School Archive, Headmaster's Report and Prize List for 1924, Australian National Museum of Education, University of Canberra

ⁱⁱⁱ See H.M. Saxby, *op cit.*, Chapter 3, "Period 1900-1918, The Era of Women Writers: Ethel Turner, Mary Grant Bruce, Louise Mack," p. 72.

^{iv} Scutter, Heather, "Children's Literature" Chapter 17 of Martyn Lyons and John Arnold, (eds.) *A History of the Book in Australia 1891-1945*, University of Queensland Press, 2001.

^v Stella Lees and Pam Macintyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Children's Literature*, O.U.P., Melbourne, 1993.



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Under this program, the Archives has received the papers, manuscripts and artwork of many leading Australian authors, illustrators and publishers.

Enquiries about this program should be directed to:

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