



# Children's Literature and National Identity

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

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Edited by Margaret Meek, Trentham Books, 152pp, 1 85856 204 X, £13.95 pbk

At a time when the English speaking children's literature world seems to be particularly parochial, this collection of essays is welcome. Its title might be more accurate if the word European had been included in the title, for there is little consideration of children's literature and national identity beyond Europe's shores. A dozen contributors offer different views of how children's literature crosses frontiers; of how we depict our own and other nations to our children; and of what is distinctive and what is shared in the children's literature of Europe. Meek contributes a preface which stresses the need to diminish ethnocentrism and to celebrate translation as 'part of the art and craft of writing'. Without translators, as Anthea Bell reminds us, many of the finest works of literature would be unknown to the most of us who can read only English.

There are some topics which are not touched on here. There is the extent to which the U.S.A. and Australia, and, incidentally, the role of an international market and international publishing houses influence English language children's books. What is apparent from many of these essays is how much we have in common across the continent and how much British readers are missing. While there is no shortage in other European countries of translations from English, and many British writers enjoy huge followings in Europe, our publishing industry remains resolutely insular.

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Running Order:

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