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**Mother Goose in 1985 • Meet Tony Ross •
The latest Award Winners • Charlotte Voake •
Pick of the Season • Rose Tremain**

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Cover Story

The illustration on our cover is from a new book of nursery rhymes illustrated by Charlotte Voake – *Over the Moon* published by Walker Books, 0 7445 0337 X, £6.95.

We are grateful to Walker Books for help in using this illustration.

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

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AT

The Bookspace, Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank

20th - 28th January - 11 am - 9 pm

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EDITOR'S PAGE



Pat

This issue of **Books for Keeps** has even more books in it than usual. Plenty here we hope to entertain and inform you as the term draws to a close and to keep you occupied over Christmas as you decide what it would be nice to buy for home, school or library – if you only had any money left to spend! There's news of the end-of-year children's book awards (page 18) including the first run out for the Smarties Prize, the most valuable in money terms (unless a children's book takes the £18,000 for the overall winner of the Whitbread Award in January; quite a possibility with Janni Howker's current form). The Smarties Prize didn't quite get the Booker-style coverage; but then it took the Booker many years to get to the super-hype status it now has. Coming into the limelight at last this year though was Children's Book Week: a Tuesday Call phone-in with Bob Leeson and Julia Eccleshare, Woman's Hour, Bookshelf, bits on TV. Was it all because of The Train? That certainly seems to have aroused a lot of interest and earned its keep in publicity and books sold. However the individual experiences of adults and children meeting the train on its nationwide tour varied as our report (page 14) shows. To be realistic it was inevitable that things would go wrong, that the organisers wouldn't be able to maintain the same level of activity throughout, that everyone learned a lot and would do it better next time. But what a pity that such an imaginative venture should prove disappointing and even demotivating for some of the very people who in the end are the most important of all – the readers, buyers and borrowers of books.

Something Extra

So let's get back to the books. We've got very excited about Nursery Rhymes as you can see (page 4). With so many excellent collections available there should be no question of not making the most of the potential of this marvellously rich resource. Eric Hadley's article should give us all something to think about; as does Eric's latest book, **English in the Middle Years** (Arnold, 0 7131 0971 8, £4.95). Describing how his own ideas have changed and developed over years working with children he makes a strong and plausible case for particular approaches to developing children as writers and readers. It's highly personal and anecdotal, challenging and helpful; well worth reading for anyone who cares, as Eric does, about children and literature.

And there's our own end-of-year selection which this time we have called **That Extra Something** (page 20). Making the selection I was struck by how derivative some of this season's titles were. Perhaps that is too derogatory, after all imitation is the sincerest form of flattery they say; all creative artists have 'influences' and many of the books that came into this category were really rather good. Nevertheless I couldn't help remarking the influence of Briggs' **The Snowman**, Shirley Hughes' **Up and Up** and Jill Murphy's **Whatever Next!** on John Prater's **The Gift** (Bodley Head, £5.95) in which two children fly off on an imaginary and imaginative journey in a cardboard box which contained a rather mundane present. Equally Pamela Allen's riotous **A Lion in the Night** (Hamish Hamilton, £5.95) owes a lot to Sendak, Pat Hutchins, the Berenstains' **Bears in the Night** and especially Briggs and Vipont's **The Elephant and the Bad Baby**; and Lyn and Richard Howell's split page technique and storyline in **Winifred's New Bed** (Hamish Hamilton, £5.95) owes even more to Carle's **The Very Hungry Caterpillar**.

Then there are all the gimmicks. The nicest

is Methuen's **My Own Book Bag** (£4.95) a bright, strong little PVC bag (picture of Miffy on one side, Bear on the other) containing two Bruna books. Just right for taking books to and from playgroup and school. And every publisher it seems is finding some way into do-it-yourself, choose-your-own adventure. Oxford have got Steve Jackson (of Puffin Fighting Fantasy) involved with illustrator Stephen Lavis on a Masquerade-type puzzle picture quest in **The Tasks of Tantalos** (£5.95). Just to keep it neat and in the family David Fickling, Steve Jackson's editor at Oxford, has created (with Perry Hinton) his own Fantasy Questbooks for Puffin. **The Path of Peril** (murdered explorer, assorted clues, treasure to be found) and **Starflight Zero** (the galaxy to save) are now with us (£2.95). Puffin are offering a bottle of champagne to the first two adults to solve the mystery and £20 of Puffins to the first two children. I'd still be struggling to sort it out as we ran up to Christmas 2000 but I dare say by the time you read this the books and the champagne will have been won already.

Inch High Newcomer

An artist we associate with originality rather than gimmickry is Peter Firmin. His long association with Oliver Postgate has produced **Noggin the Nog**, **Bagpuss**, and **Ivor the Engine**, and his own illustrated stories of Basil Brush (he makes the puppet) are still very popular with young readers. His latest characters are Pinny and Victor, two one inch high dolls who have all manner of miniature adventures in three new **Pinny Books** from Deutsch (£1.95 each, hbk).



'Don't be afraid,' she said. 'We can paddle ashore on my feather.' From **Pinny and the Bird**.

Peter Firmin is a great maker of things so it was no surprise to discover that before writing about Pinny and Victor he had carved them both from hard wood. They are based on traditional 'Dutch dolls' first made in the eighteenth century, with jointed knees and elbows that really work, and carefully painted with tiny shoes, little red mouths and dots for eyes. His interest was aroused when, after making the puppets for the TV film **Tottie and the Dolls House**, he was sent a tiny one inch tall doll to mend. 'The lady who sent her said the doll was 150 years old and her name was Sarah. She lived in a tortoise-shell box and was known as The Smallest Doll in the World. With the aid of a magnifying glass and some very tiny tools I made her a new arm and fixed it; but before I sent her back I made a copy to add to my

collection of toys. Since then I've been shown others. One is kept in a blue egg-shell and tiny gold letters proclaim *her* The Smallest Doll in the World. I was even shown one in a museum that was only half the size. But I have never seen another Victor with his blue sailor suit. I think he may be unique. I wanted to write some stories for my grandchildren so naturally these dolls became the main characters – that's when I named them Pinny and Victor.' I'm sure there will be lots more young readers besides Peter Firmin's grandchildren who will be delighted and intrigued by these books.

Originals

Two other originals are Tony Ross and Bernard Ashley. We've been looking forward to featuring Tony Ross in an **Authorgraph** for some time and our special end of the year issue seemed just the right place (page 12). Writer as well as artist, Tony Ross manages to delight adults and children equally. He is a highly original talent, one to relish. Tony Ross' **Towser** has made a big hit on TV, and TV and films are fast becoming familiar ground for Bernard Ashley. Not long ago we did a big **Sound and Vision** feature on the TV adaptation of **Break in the Sun**. Now Bernard has scripted his first screenplay for **Running Scared** (page 16) and a film version of **Terry on the Fence** made by the Children's Film and Television Foundation was part of the Junior London Film Festival. The press releases credit primary head Bernard with a 'remarkable understanding of the criminal mind'. We'll have to ask him where he got it!

Looking Up

Inevitably there has also been a wave of publishing in advance of the arrival of Halley's Comet. For those who know little about astronomy but want (or feel forced) to take an interest three books seem to offer information and guidance in an accessible and interest-arousing way. All three are called **Halley's Comet!** The spiral bound, glossy volume by Francis Reddy (Pan, 0 330 29164 5, £7.95) is expensive but it is well-designed, has a large percentage of full colour plates, a model to cut out and assemble, a large colour poster and the most easily understood where-to-see-it sky maps I have yet encountered. The text answers most questions and mercifully avoids jargon. Cheaper and most readable of all is Peter Wragg's book from Knight (0 340 38087 X, £1.50). Its conversational tone and clear exposition really helped me to understand what was going on. Patrick Moore and Heather Couper's book is a pop-up, and a very educational one too which brilliantly uses the form to show and explain (Dean, 0 603 00446 6, £7.95). With our eyes on the heavens will we notice what's happening back at the ranch? Are Corgi showing the way in children's books (page 24)? If you glance down in January you'll find approximately a million and a half Cadbury's Drinking Chocolate tins bearing a label which entitles the sender to a £1 voucher from Penguin redeemable at shops in the Book Tokens scheme.

We'll be back in January with a special focus on non-fiction and an expanded paperback review section to keep you up-to-date.

Meanwhile, happy holidays. ●

Sing a Song of Mother Goose

Jolly millers, pipers' sons, kings in counting houses, Little Boy Blues blowing horns and sleeping under haycocks, beggars coming to town: what have all these to say to children raised on **Saturday Superstore** and the **A-Team**? Is there still a place for nursery rhymes in our high tech world?

Eric Hadley has an answer.

Amongst the remaindered stock in a second-hand bookshop, I found recently a book by an Italian-American called Allesandro Falassi. It was called

There is nothing in my own experience or that of most people I know which matches his account of a community gathering regularly of an evening in

Folklore by the Fireside (Scolar Press) and in it Falassi gives an account of the tradition of story-telling, song and poetry still alive until recently in the Tuscan villages from which he, his family and relations came.

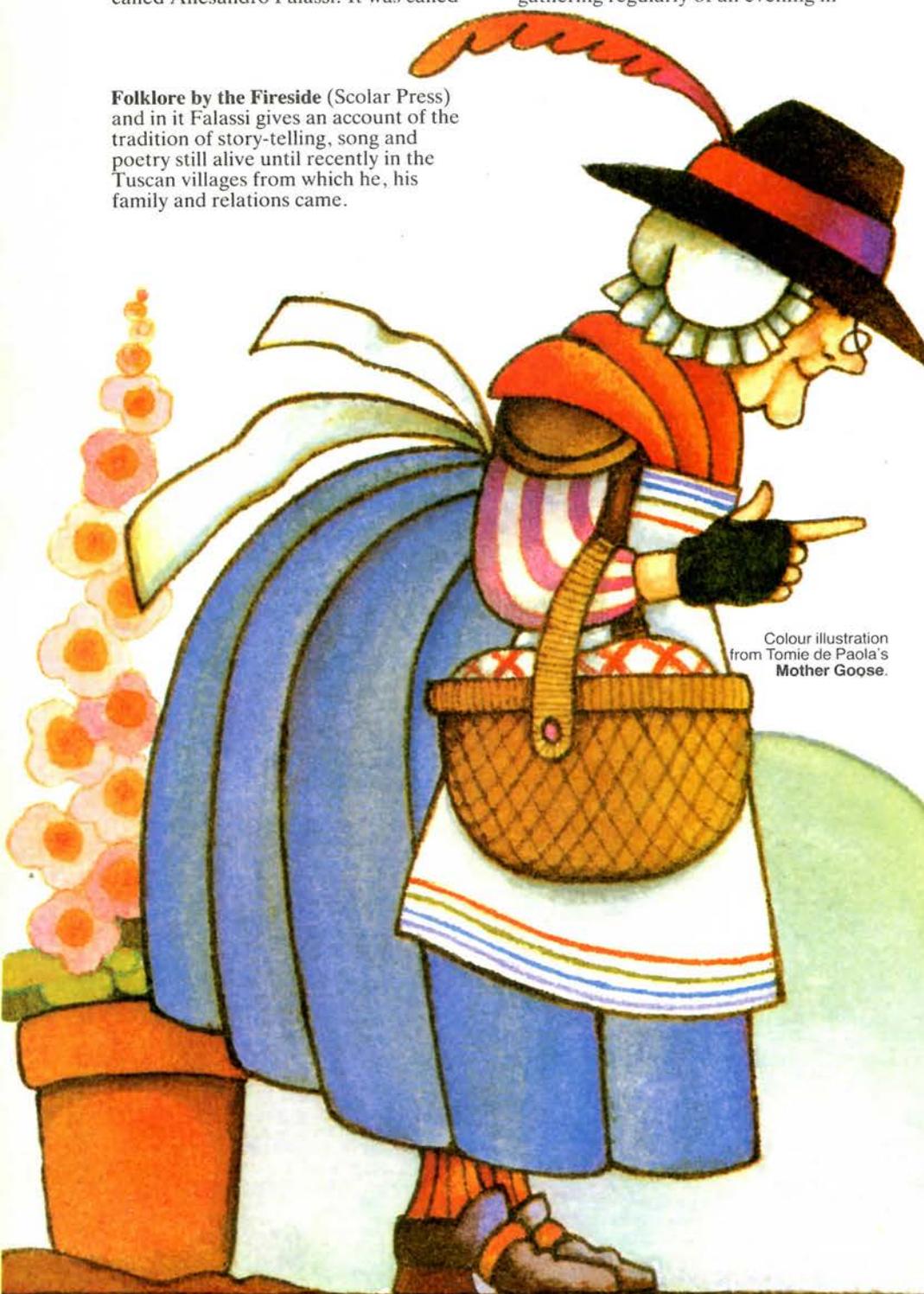
Eric Hadley teaches in the South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education.

each other's houses. They gathered together around the fireplace – specially prepared for the occasion – to tell stories, sing songs, ask riddles, comment on (and insult) each other through rhymes. The stories and songs, though ancient, were constantly reworked through questions, commentary, topical reference from the audience. That audience (not the passive one of concerts and plays) included adults, adolescents and children. Though there was a special time in the proceedings for them, their stories, songs and rhymes were part of a continuity which led into the mysterious and exciting world of the adults. Before they were hustled off to bed they might just catch one of the young men pouring out his feelings in song for one of the young girls present or insulting the prowess of one of his rivals in her affection. As Maurice O'Sullivan remarks of his own early childhood experience of song in the very similar Irish-speaking ceildh tradition: 'Every word came out clearly. I did not understand the meaning of the words but the other part of the song was plain to me – the voice, the tremor and the sweetness.'

I don't offer this little account in a spirit of nostalgia. You can't be nostalgic for what you have never had and that kind of society is for us irrecoverable and unimaginable. Or is it? Though it may have lost its connections with what came after for adolescents and adults, isn't that tradition still alive in a truncated form every time a parent takes a child upon its knee to sing or say a nursery rhyme? Even more surprising, isn't that 'special place' for song and poetry still made every time an infant teacher invites her pupils to step away from the tables and chairs of conspicuous instruction to gather on the carpet and share a different kind of listening and saying?

The resilience of this part of our story and poetic tradition is all the more surprising when we consider how small a part poetry plays in the lives of adults and how hard it is to assert its place in learning in our education system – how surprised we would be to see poetry pushed in our classrooms with the same financial expenditure and governmental energy as is lavished on micros.

And yet, to stay with the jargon of that world for a moment, the collection of rhymes, songs, ballads, jokes, riddles, puns and tongue twisters we choose to



Colour illustration from Tomie de Paola's *Mother Goose*.

call 'nursery rhymes' is the most comprehensive 'language development programme' that we have and the user trials have been going on for some hundreds of years now. Those rhymes are not as their designation now suggests a random sample of entertaining ditties fit only for the very young. In one sense, they are severely functional – they help the child to become a member of the language community in which eventually they will have to take up their adult place. Unlike some contemporary designers of 'language programmes' the collective wisdom of the historical community understood that *inconspicuous* learning – learning that we do without realising that we are learning – is a very powerful means. Powerful enough, at least, to ensure that we don't have too many remedial talkers. As one eminent linguist has said: '... songs and rhymes help the learner to effortlessly retain the basic patterns of our grammar' – both the spoken and written forms. What he didn't go on to explain was how and why this happens – so I'll make an attempt.

We are saturated as babies and young children in a world of linguistic 'noise'. What the experience of songs and rhymes encourages is attentiveness and alertness to meaning in that 'noise'. It is precisely those qualities which 'mark out' their difference from ordinary discourse which are so important – melody, repetitions, rhythms, cadences, etc. and, of course, their unchangingness amongst constant change. To put it another way, they help children to become 'listeners' – people who attend with the expectation of meaning. It's hard to separate that expectation of meaning from our entry into a world of shared meaning which itself depends upon human relationship. We learn to listen and talk (and eventually to read) in order to share more fully in the human world which surrounds us. As an old Suffolk saying puts it: 'The lil' ol' boy sat on this father's knee while he wor a-telling him a story. And he kept lookin' at him as though he wor a-pickin' the words out of his mouth.'

These songs and rhymes offer an invitation to the child – an invitation to participate in and gain mastery over words. Gaining mastery over words involves taking risks and sorting yourself out in this kind of minefield:

Betty Botter bought some butter
But, she said, the butter's bitter,
If I put it in my butter . . .

Are you saying the words or are they saying you? Gaining mastery also involves playing with language, seeing how far you can go – like the infant pupil I met recently who had discovered the power of the word 'very' – especially if you had repeated it five times in the same sentence. Nursery rhymes commit outrages with language – rhyme almost invariably dominates meaning –

Little Poll Parrot
Sat in his garret . . .

and they encourage further outrages and improvisations. I won't go into the changes that my son can ring upon the following at the expense of his poor father:

Bring Daddy home
With a fiddle and a drum
A pocket full of spices
An apple and a plum.

And that brings me indirectly to riddles. I used to think the appeal of riddles lay mainly in their linguistic puzzles. I'm now more inclined to the view that their real appeal lies in the *asking* – power over words is one thing but power over others through words expands the possibilities enormously.

Earlier I stressed the didactic function of nursery rhymes – linguistic rules, conceptual rules, rules for living – but there is a strong critical and subversive strand. They permit what in ordinary discourse would be unspeakable and impermissible to the young child – expressions of rage, anger, disgust, undiluted plain-speaking:

I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell
But this I know, and know full well
I do not like thee, Doctor Fell.

This is the area in which institutionalized and collected rhyme begins to shade off into children's own culture with its rich vein of insults, jeering, double entendres and sotto voce risky remarks devised to test the adult's 'official' hearing.

But children are not only hard and resilient, they are also susceptible. How else can I explain how my raging, self-willed two-year-old lets himself drift away on:

Hush-a-bye baby on the tree-top
When the wind blows the cradle
will rock . . .

Even he can feel the 'voice, the tremor and the sweetness'.

Like all great poetry and unlike so much anaemic verse written for children nursery rhymes don't moralise. Even the gallery of monsters which haunt the collections is not primarily intended to terrorise children to make them good. At two years old, the pressure came from my son and not me to 'Read Giant!':

Fee, fi, fo, fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman
Be he alive or be he dead
I'll grind his bones to make my
bread.

Just as you have to learn how to listen you have to learn what to be afraid of – passing through the stage of being at the mercy of your generalised fears to that of fearing a specific creature. What

more exquisite pleasure can there be than playing out and practising those fears ('What's the time, Mr Wolf?'). Emotions, that is, become more real and more known through the definitions they achieve in metaphor, play and dramatisation. Not that the range of emotions in nursery rhyme is limited to fear and anxiety. How could that be so when they were fashioned, as that great respecter of nursery rhymes, Wordsworth, recognised, for:

'A race of real children; not too
wise
Too learned or too good; but
wanton, fresh
And banded up and down by love
and hate . . .
. . . May books and Nature be their
early joy.'

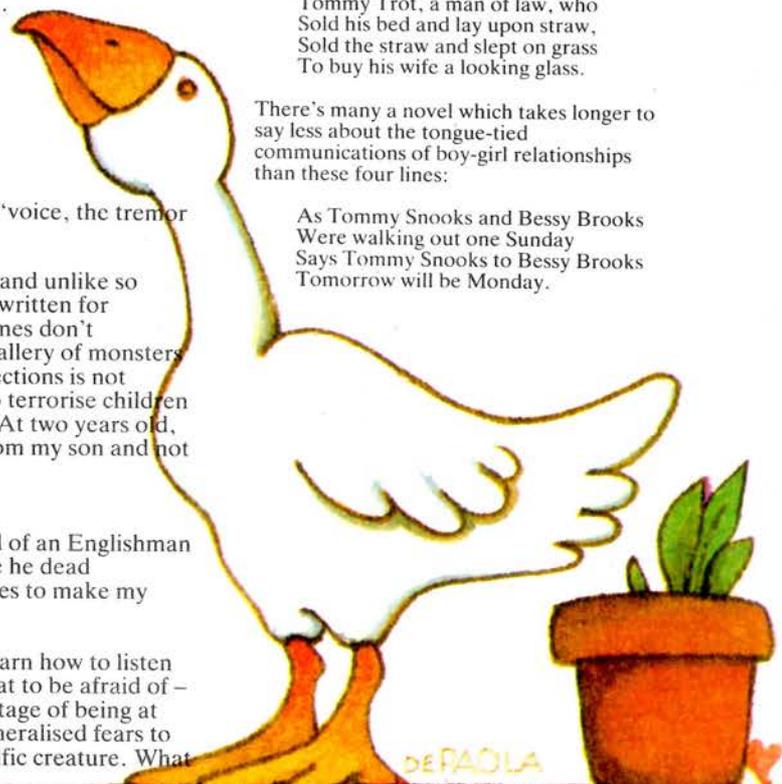
Bill Boyle and Pat Triggs back him up.

Speculations about what nursery rhymes mean in the form of scholarly investigations of their historical, political and folklore origins are fascinating – to adults. Children aren't usually concerned to have it explained that *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary* is probably Mary Queen of Scots or that the pig stolen by Tom the piper's son was an eighteenth-century sweetmeat and not a real pig as depicted in so many Mother Goose collections. What connects children to this motley collection of songs, chants, prayers, riddles, jokes and jingles which we have accumulated over centuries is the irresistible combination of rhythm, rhyme and story. There can be no better introduction to the world of story than these highly condensed narratives; their very brevity leaves plenty of space for listeners or sayers to roam around in making of them what they will. And there's no doubt that all human life is here. *Little Polly Flinders* whipped by her mother for spoiling her nice new clothes, *Little Tommy Tittlemouse* who caught fishes in other men's ditches and

Tommy Trot, a man of law, who
Sold his bed and lay upon straw,
Sold the straw and slept on grass
To buy his wife a looking glass.

There's many a novel which takes longer to say less about the tongue-tied communications of boy-girl relationships than these four lines:

As Tommy Snooks and Bessy Brooks
Were walking out one Sunday
Says Tommy Snooks to Bessy Brooks
Tomorrow will be Monday.



Nursery rhymes are resonant with possible meanings and the joy is that there is no pressure to 'understand' them. Who is wandering 'upstairs downstairs and in my lady's chamber'? Who is this 'old man who wouldn't say his prayers', who gets 'thrown downstairs' so precisely 'by the left leg'? What's he doing in my lady's chamber? Who is telling this story? Why is someone talking to a goose?

One mark of an experienced reader we are told is tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity – three and four-year-olds seem to be off to a good start.

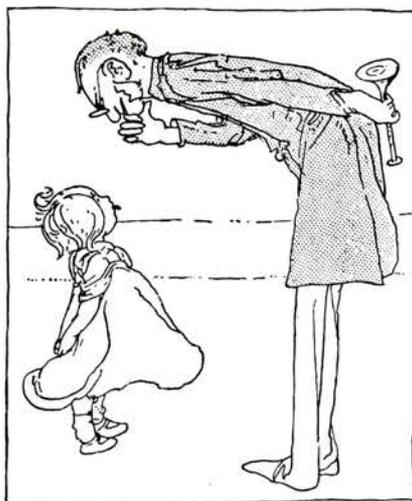
Sharers of nursery rhymes can feel the sadness of **I had a Little Pony**, the moral indignation of **Ding Dong Bell**; they can relish nonsense and word play, bounce to **Ride a Cock Horse**, tickle toes with **This Little Piggy**. An involvement of all the senses which is held together by the controlling sense of rhythm.

Rhythm is part of all poetry, from the nursery rhyme and witty limerick to the moving love poem. From the banal street chant of:

Tell tale tit
Your mother can't knit
Your father can't walk
With a walking stick.

to the playgroup sound of:

Dip, dip, dip
My blue ship
Sails on the water,



'I do not like thee, Dr Fell,' from Granda's **Popular Nursery Rhymes**.

Like a cup and saucer,
O-U-T
spells OUT!

the common factor is rhythm. Rhythm gives the rhyme or poem its shape, it defines the sound and makes it easier to remember. This sense of rhythm in the early experience of the child as he is exposed to nursery rhymes, enables him to develop a sensitivity to the musical qualities inherent in any future appreciation of language. The combination of strong rhythms and memorable rhymes must explain why

Mother Goose has stood the test of time.

The words are crafted to provide sounds that give pleasure to the small child. It is in this that the real 'success' of nursery rhymes must be measured. From the attraction of **Baa Baa Black Sheep** and **Mary had a Little Lamb**, the progression is natural to the world of narrative poetry and the subtleties of nonsense verse. But without the initial attraction of **Hey diddle diddle** and **Goosey, Goosey Gander**, how many of us would have started on that progression? How many of the youngsters who now relish the 'story style' poetry of Michael Rosen and Roger McGough, would have done so without a dose of **Desperate Dan** that dirtiest of old men, who 'washed his face in a frying pan'? The nonsense verse of such as Colin West and Spike Milligan will be better appreciated by those who have cut their teeth on:

Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John,
Went to bed with his trousers on.
One shoe off, and one shoe on,
Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John.

Because of their mesmeric rhythm and simple rhymes, nursery rhymes are easily remembered or memorised by their young audience, which enhances the sense of sharing the fun later. Children can express within their own circle, be it family or nursery group, the pleasure that they feel in the sound of the words. Our adult, more sophisticated (?) reaction to poetry or prose is simply an extension or mature progression of the same feelings, the same responses.

Bill Boyle is the author of **What's in a Poem** (Collins) and recently scripted the Thames TV poetry documentary **Words Joined Together**, in the **Middle English Series**.

Take Your Pick . . . from our recommendations of new titles and in-print editions.

The Oxford Nursery Rhyme Book

Edited by Iona and Peter Opie, Oxford University Press, 0 19 869112 2, £6.95

The essential reference book for all students of nursery rhyme. First published in 1955, the collection contains over 800 rhymes. Illustrated with early woodcuts, and additional designs by Joan Hassall. (See also **The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes** by the same authors, 0 19 869111 4, £6.95.)

Popular Nursery Rhymes

Edited by Jennifer Mulherin, Granada, 0 246 11492 4, £5.95

Also mainly for adults. Notes on possible origins and explanations and illustrations from a variety of past collections, including many from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Lavender's Blue

Compiled by Kathleen Lines, illustrated by Harold Jones, OUP, 0 19 279537 6, £6.95

A classic collection in traditional style.

The Mother Goose Treasury

Illustrated by Raymond Briggs, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 90800 0, £8.95; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.088 X, £4.95

A collection of over 400 rhymes, each one given an individual Raymond Briggs' interpretation. Amazing value.

Mother Goose

Illustrated by Brian Wildsmith, OUP, 0 19 279611 9, £5.95

Wildsmith's geometric style and magical use of colour make this another collection that youngsters will marvel over as a 'read aloud' or private reading book.

The Great Big Book of Nursery Rhymes

Compiled by Peggy Blakeley, A & C Black, 0 7136 1644 X, £7.50

Well spaced rhymes, large colour illustrations – another good collection which will be enjoyed by infants and lower juniors.

Nicola Bayley's Book of Nursery Rhymes

Jonathan Cape, 0 224 01337 8, £4.95; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.371 4, £1.50

A good collection, illustrated in Nicola Bayley's by now distinctively hallmarked style.

Mother Goose

Tomie de Paola, Methuen, 0 416 54940 3, £9.95

A sumptuous collection of 200 rhymes, beautifully designed and produced, and rich with de Paola's gorgeous colours.

Over the Moon

Charlotte Voake, Walker Books, 0 7445 0337 X, £6.95

Over 100 rhymes in another beautifully designed and produced collection. Charlotte Voake's illustrations take a child's eye view and are both witty and warmly humorous.

The Mother Goose Book

Compiled and illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen, Beaver Books, 0 600 20478 2, £1.95 pbk

Over 160 rhymes in the close packed sixty pages. All arranged by theme, with humorous illustrations.

Rub a Dub Dub

Alan Rogers, Granada Dragon, 0 246 12327 3, £2.95 pbk

Cartoon-style illustrations in strong colours which don't draw forth such a strong imaginative response as the pictures in other collections. May be familiar though, from the TV series. (Also **Rub a Dub Dub 2 – More Nursery Rhymes**, 0 246 12571 3, £4.95 hbk; 0 246 12328 1, £2.95 pbk, in the same style and format.)

The Faber Book of Nursery Songs

Selected by Donald Mitchell, arranged by Carey Blyton, Faber, 0 571 13472 6, £4.95 pbk

Paperback edition of this 1968 collection of

90 rhymes which has become an established classic. Piano accompaniments for the non-specialist and a simple percussion line make it attractive to even the minimally musical. Alan Howard's black and white illustrations are a bonus.

Oranges and Lemons

Compiled by Karen King, illustrated by Ian Beck, OUP, 0 19 279796 4, £5.95

A good companion to **Round and Round the Garden**, Sarah Williams' collection of fingerplay rhymes. Singing and dancing games (traditional and modern) with musical accompaniment – including guitar chords – and how-to-do-it in words and pictures. Karen King is a playgroup leader so the songs are guaranteed tried and tested. Audio-cassette of all the songs also available – 0 19 279821 9, £3.50 inc. VAT.

Hand Rhymes

Collected and illustrated by Marc Brown, Collins, 0 00 195306 0, £4.95

Fourteen hand rhymes with accompanying picture instructions and delightful, large, full-colour illustrations with lots to look at and talk about.

Halloweena Hecate

Cynthia Mitchell, illustrated by Eileen Browne, Heinemann, 0 434 95140 4, £4.50
Lots of skipping rhymes for every occasion. Some amazingly catchy chants which could restore a dying playground heritage!

Hairy Tales and Nursery Crimes

Mike Rosen, Deutsch, 0 233 97708 2, £3.95
'What does Jack find at the top of the Tinstalk?' When you can appreciate the in-jokes of any group you really belong. Young readers and listeners with a rich background of tales and rhymes can claim their place in the literate community as they enjoy the word play and jokes arising from the outrageous liberties Mike Rosen takes with our traditional story heritage. ●

OVER THE MOON



Charlotte Voake talks about her new book of Nursery Rhymes

When Walker Books suggested this Nursery Rhyme project to me I could scarcely believe my luck – it seemed the nicest possible thing to do! My editor gave me a whole selection of rhymes which Selina Hastings had made and I used this as a starting point. I had instructions to start with **Hodddley Poddley Puddle and Fogs**; that was a good idea because I'd never come across that one before. Later I added some of my own choice – like **A Apple Pie** – and decided that we could do without **Taffy was a Welshman** and **What are Little Girls made of?**. I've always loved nursery rhymes but I hadn't realised until I started looking closely at them how really weird and funny they are. I was tempted to do more slapstick but I resisted it – I think too much funniness palls. I've aimed for a balance by trying to respect the poetry as well as bring out the fun and humour.

With hindsight, I think the main problem that faced me, and I imagine that faces anyone doing a Nursery Rhyme book, was my deeply ingrained notions about how they should be treated; a result of over-familiarity with a lot of the verse and the pictures which accompany them. It was for this reason that I made a conscious effort not to look at other people's work while I was involved with this book, in an attempt to keep my own approach to the verses as fresh as possible. It is a modern book so I didn't want it to be *too* traditional. I think modernish looking things fit some of the rhymes very well; but **Little Bo-Peep** has got to be traditional. I've always been interested in costume design; I collect books about fashion. It's not a question of getting things accurate, more of getting a feel for the look. And of course **Humpty Dumpty** has to look like **Humpty Dumpty** – you can't go too far in cutting across people's expectations!



Over the Moon was originally designed to have 96 pages and to be in full colour throughout, but this was changed early on in the project to a 128 page book, in order to include more rhymes, and was now to be in both black and white and colour. When one person is doing a book of this length, a possible pitfall is lack of variety in the drawing, overall, and the black and white pictures help overcome this, I think. I worked in pen and ink and, for the colour, with water colour inks and crayons. I'd not done a lot of illustration in full colour before; I find it very difficult to work in bright colours.

For those lovely epic rhymes like **Mother Goose** and **The House that Jack Built** I had to get a lot of help with the design of the pages because the words fit so closely with the tiny illustrations; but they were very enjoyable to do and lent themselves to being treated absolutely straight, with the minimum of interpretation on my part. In all I worked with three designers each at different times. I had meetings with my editor every two or three weeks to look at roughs and consider design. The support from Walker was marvellous. There was help and advice when I needed it (lots at first) but in the end it was up to me to decide what I wanted and how I

wanted it. They took so much time, trouble and effort with little aspects of the design – like deciding to change the type size (even though it had been set) because they thought it was too small and larger type would integrate better with the pictures; and they designed the end papers too, using my drawings. I like those very much. I was given a year in which to finish the book – it seemed a long time to me, but in fact it took slightly over that, in the end.

I was surprised by which illustrations seemed to come out relatively easily and others for which I had to do masses of preliminary drawings before I came up with something I thought did anything like justice to the verse. Almost invariably, though, it was the very well-known ones which caused me the most problems.

I could recite **Little Bo-Peep** almost without thinking, and that is why I had never really taken in that there are some very odd and amusing things about it which had to be taken into account. I emphasised the role the sheep play in the proceedings to try and highlight some of these – for example, in the last verse, they're looking very worried, and dashing off as fast as they can, as well they might, since **Bo-Peep** apparently has plans to tack the tails, which she has just found hanging on a tree, back onto them again!

Little Boy Blue started off as a tiny vignette at the bottom of a page closely covered with other nursery rhymes. It struck me then that the drawing wasn't big enough for such an important rhyme, and it immediately improved when I turned it into a whole double page spread with a landscape full of cows and sheep, and people and dogs having a picnic in the fields. This meant that we either had to regroup the other rhymes destined for that page, or dispense with some of them altogether. Right up to the last minute there had to be this constant process of elimination and addition.

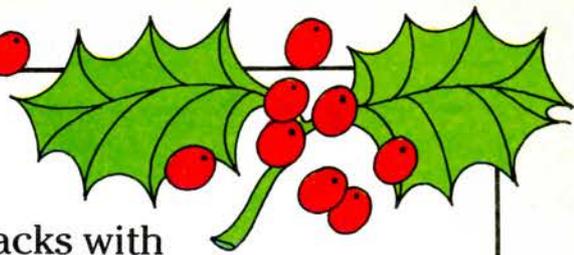
It's been pointed out to me that in most of the drawings I have a character looking out of the page at the readers, drawing them in and involving them in what's going on. I must have been doing it subconsciously because I felt it needed to be done. I can see it's there; I really like the idea of making a bridge between me and the reader.

I haven't any children of my own and I didn't try out any of the drawings. If what I have produced is child-centred that's just how it came out. I think that the process we went through of compromise between the discipline of the original selection and the ideas which presented themselves as we progressed has given rise to a comprehensive book with what I hope is a fresh approach to this well-worn path. ●

Charlotte Voake always wanted to be an illustrator. When she was still at school she did her first published drawings for **School Bookshop News** – the first magazine of the SBA – and as a result of that was commissioned to do the illustrations for a Heinemann series while at London University studying the History of Art. After university and a spell at Penguin she went to work for an art gallery in Liverpool and was persuaded to take freelance illustrating seriously. 'The fact that I hadn't had any formal training didn't seem to put publishers off,' she says.

At 28 she is now married and lives in London. **Over the Moon** is her second book for Walker.

Christmas Stories



A selection of new hardbacks and recent paperbacks with a seasonal flavour

The Nativity Play, Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 38300 3, £4.95

A celebration and a timely reflection of similar events happening in primary schools all over the country about now. Mum improvises cheerfully to turn Tracy into an angel and Sam into a shepherd; Miss Harvey, 'our teacher', chivvies, encourages and keeps up a running commentary of instructions from her place at the piano. There are string beards, coat hanger haloes, children thinly disguised as donkeys, camels, sheep. Doors get stuck, lines forgotten, but at the finale as everyone joins in with Hark the Herald Angels we can all agree with Mrs Booth (our next door neighbour) who clearly thinks it's all lovely.

Spirit Child, John Bierhorst, pictures by Barbara Cooney, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 38197 3, £5.95

A nativity story with a difference. John Bierhorst has translated a version of the first Christmas composed by a sixteenth-century missionary in collaboration with Aztec poets, and combining elements from the gospels with European and Aztec folklore. 'The angel Gabriel's face came shining, the way the sun comes up making everything bright. His wings came gleaming, came glistening. They were longer and more brilliantly green than quetzal plumes.' Barbara Cooney's pictures echo the Mexican theme - a host of Aztec angels make music amidst a shower of exotic flowers and birds; the Holy Family sits on a rush floor under a palm covered canopy, a parrot perched overhead. The colours are gorgeous.

The Story of the Three Wise Kings, retold and illustrated by Tomie de Paola, Methuen, 0 416 49720 9, £4.50 pbk

A beautifully designed and decorative version of the Epiphany; gravely formal and stylised, the pictures are in characteristic de Paola colour tones. The figures gaze calmly out of the page or stand in profile like a medieval frieze. Expensive for a paperback but this is full size with a stitched spine and high quality paper.

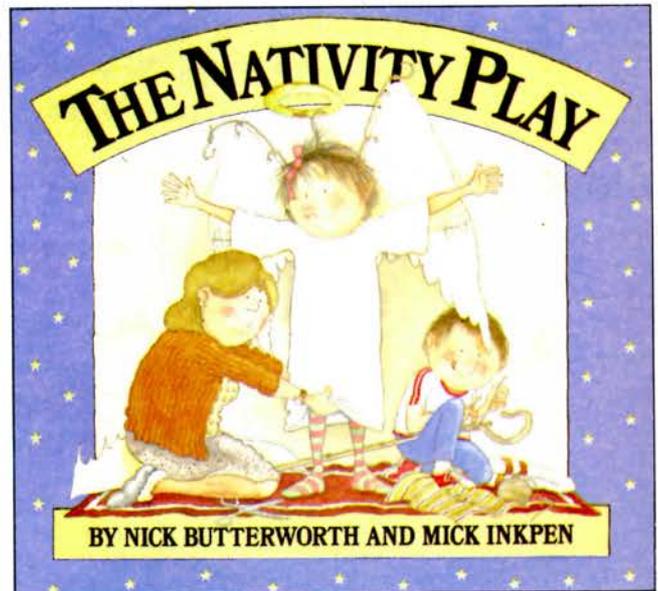
Baboushka, Arthur Scholey, ill. Ray and Corrine Burrows, Lion, 0 86760 423 9, £1.50 pbk

A reprint of this popular retelling of a traditional Russian folk tale. Baboushka is so preoccupied by the dailiness of her life that she misses seeing the Christmas star, misses her chance of joining the three kings on their journey. She is too late for everything but continues her wandering search giving the toys in her basket (intended for the holy child) to good sleeping children. Bright, decorative illustrations make this a most attractive version of the story.

The Story of Holly and Ivy, Rumer Godden, pictures by Barbara Cooney, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 232 6, £6.25

Rumer Godden's warmly comforting story is here given picture book treatment in this well-designed and generously sized edition. Barbara Cooney's pictures exactly capture the old-fashioned feel of this story of a doll (Holly), a little girl (Ivy), a policeman and his wife and a lot of wishing - which of course comes true. The Christmas setting of small town, toyshop, bleak outside and cosy interiors is beautifully realised.

The Angel with a Mouth-Organ, Christobel Mattingley, ill. Astra Lacis, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 38444 1, £2.95 pbk



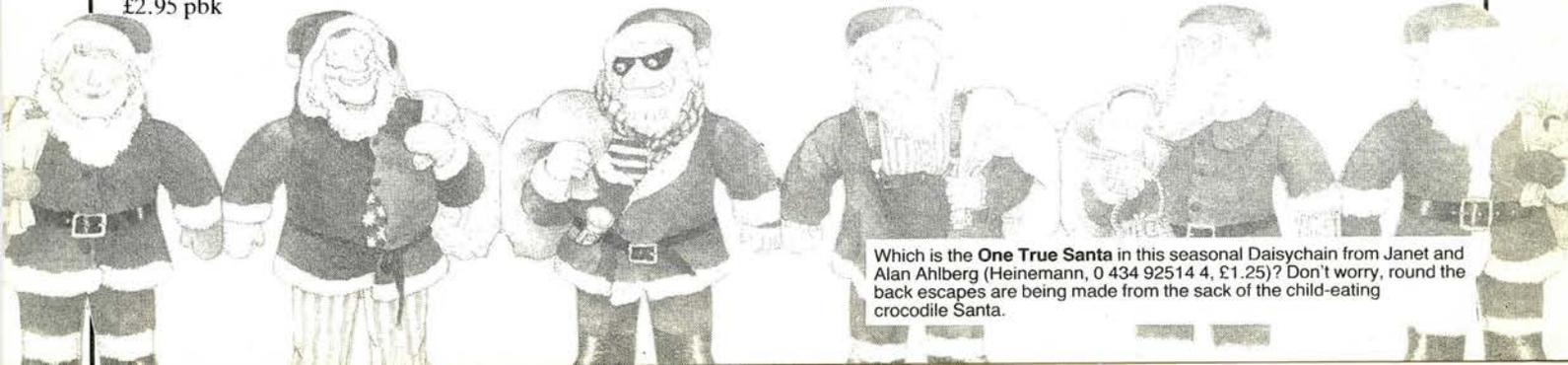
Last year we had **The Magic Saddle** from Christobel Mattingley, also a charming Christmas story. **The Angel with a Mouth-Organ** is a story within a story: mum, decorating the Christmas tree with Peter and Ingrid, tells again the story of her own childhood as a refugee in the second world war. Families are separated, possessions lost, friends and relations become ill, some die; there is pain, suffering, deprivation but occasionally joy and always hope. Eventually the war is over and at Christmas, after a moment of despair, father returns and the family is reunited. With him he brings a scrap of stained glass with the angel of the title in it; it kept him company and now hangs on the family Christmas tree every year. A restrained telling of a powerfully emotional story which slightly older children could respond to strongly.

Lucy and Tom's Christmas, Shirley Hughes, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.469 9, £1.50 pbk

Like **The Nativity Play**, **Lucy and Tom's Christmas** is very much of today but with all the warmth and traditional patterns of the ideal family Christmas. There's a lot of love and friendship in Shirley Hughes' beautifully observed pictures which exactly capture the way people are. Look at the superb sequence of drawings of the baby more interested in the wrapping paper than the present, or at Tom, leaning back secure and calm again between Grandpa's legs; the two lovingly entwined figures in Shirley Hughes' drawing express far more than words.

Round the Christmas Tree, Sara and Stephen Corrin (Eds), Puffin, 0 14 03.1777 5, £1.50 pbk

Sixteen short stories by such as Alison Uttley, Dorothy Edwards, Astrid Lindgren, Alf Proysen and others. The well-known (**My Naughty Little Sister** biting Father Christmas in **The Naughtiest Story of All**) and the classic (**The Little Fir Tree**) sit side by side with a little-known Beatrix Potter story (**Wag-by-Wall**) and Ivan Gantschev's **The Christmas Train**. A very useful collection for family reading and invaluable for teachers to have as the term draws to an end.

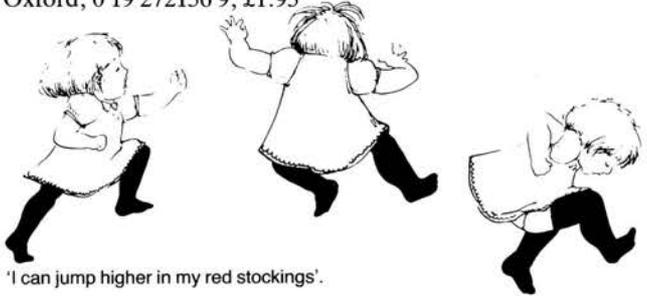


Which is the **One True Santa** in this seasonal Daisychain from Janet and Alan Ahlberg (Heinemann, 0 434 92514 4, £1.25)? Don't worry, round the back escapes are being made from the sack of the child-eating crocodile Santa.

Paperback Special

With the giving season in mind we've made a selection from this year's paperbacks of some rather special titles

Red is Best, Kathy Stinson, pictures by Robin Baird Lewis, Oxford, 0 19 272156 9, £1.95



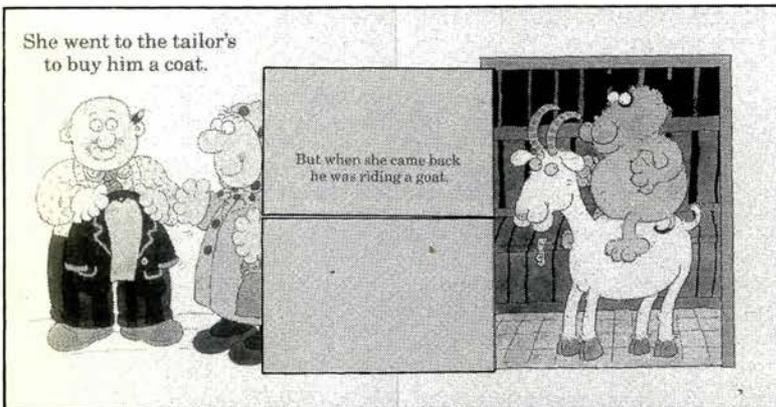
'I can jump higher in my red stockings'.

A little girl explains with cogent and convincing reasons exactly why, despite what her mum says, for her red is best. 'I can jump higher in my red stockings'; 'My red pyjamas keep the monsters away'. An instructive story for all super-rational adults who can't appreciate the logic of childhood and for all children who recognise it for themselves. Lively drawings patched with colour picture the personality of the lively narrator.

What the Moon Saw, Brian Wildsmith, Oxford, 0 19 272157 7, £2.50

A 'concept book' in story form with a neat twist at the end. The sun shows the moon the things of the day she has never seen, all in the shape of opposites. Classic Wildsmith pictures – rich in colour, texture and pattern.

Old Mother Hubbard, Colin and Jacqui Hawkins, Magnet, 0 416 59620 7, £3.50



A strong and solid-feeling paperback of the Piccadilly Press hardback published last year. The rhyme lends itself well to the lift-the-flap form; each time Mother Hubbard returns from a shopping trip her dog is up to something behind a different door. Children seem unanimous in their liking for the Hawkins' sense of humour and cartoon-style pictures.

Whatever Next!, Jill Murphy, Picturemacs, 0 333 40438 6, £1.95

Little bear wants to go to the moon. Mum says it's bedtime and anyway he'll need a rocket. Bear finds a cardboard box and a colander for his head and, not forgetting his teddy bear, zooms up the chimney and off to the moon, picking up owl on the way. He returns, a little grubby, and in the bath tells mum his adventures. All she can say is, 'Whatever next!' The pictures, full colour on the left, black and white with the text on the right, show wide, dark, star-filled heavens, the backdrop to bear's magical yet homely journey.

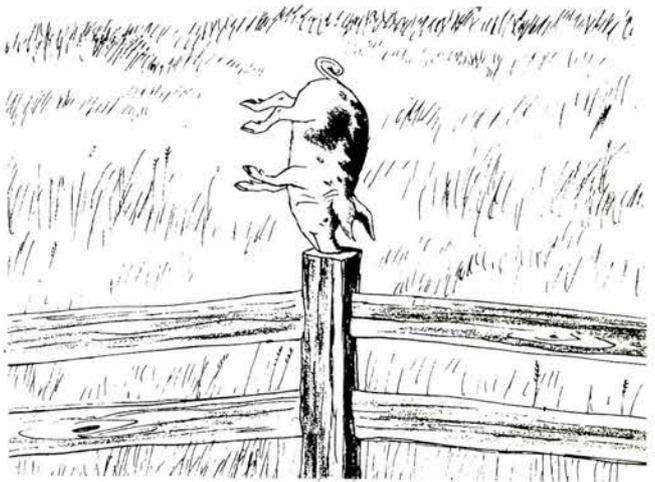
The 7 Ravens, The Brothers Grimm, ill. Lisbeth Zwerger, Picture Book Studio, 0 907234 47 X, £3.95

Lisbeth Zwerger's illustrated versions of Grimm and

Andersen have until now been available only in hardback from Neugebauer Press. Now her publishers are developing a UK paperback imprint of which this is one of the first. High quality production – glued and stitched pages in a proper spine, a soft but strong wrap around cover – makes them very attractive. This story of how a sister sets out to free her brothers from their father's hasty and much-regretted ill-wishing is beautifully interpreted in all its moods and settings, realistic and fantastic.

Chester the Worldly Pig, Bill Peet, Deutsch, 0 233 97831 3, £2.95

One of five of Bill Peet's humorous picture stories first published in the USA in the 60s and available here in paperback



for the first time. Throughout all his adventures Chester remains essentially a pig, in fact the origin of all that happens lies in some very believable pig-like feelings: 'Before I end up as so much sausage and ham I intend to try and amount to something.' Learning an acrobatic trick, running away to the circus, running away from the circus, are just some of the events that befall Chester before he realises his true destiny and we understand the wordplay in the title that has been staring us in the face all along. Recommended as a read aloud for infant/juniors, and as a read alone for those gathering experience of longer texts.

The Saga of Erik the Viking, Terry Jones, ill. Michael Foreman, Puffin, 0 14 03.1713 9, £4.95

A full-size paperback edition of the book which won the Children's Book Award (the one in which children have a say) in 1984. Terry Jones is earning himself quite a reputation as a children's storyteller and you really mustn't miss this one. Twenty-seven short action-packed adventures in which Erik and the crew of the Golden Dragon sail off to find 'The land where the sun goes at night'. Michael Foreman's pictures are the perfect accompaniment, capturing the excitement, the horror, the grandeur and the poetry of this story which is a gift for reading aloud.

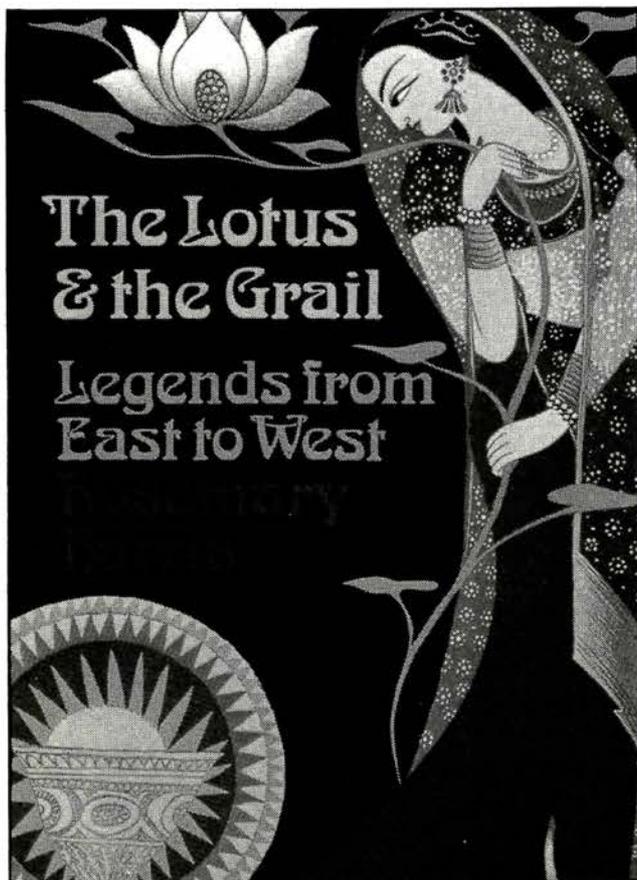
The Miracle Child, told by Elizabeth Laird with Abba Aregawi Wolde Gabriel, Collins, 0 00 184652 3, £1.95





A most unusual book in which Elizabeth Laird retells the story of Tekla Haymanot, a famous Ethiopian saint from the 13th century. The pictures are the work of an 18th-century monk who illustrated some of the many stories of the saint which were written down by the monks of the order which he founded. The battle with evil, the miracles performed by the saint are simply retold and the pictures have helpful explanatory captions which give insights into story and art. Fascinating for older children wanting to understand more about Ethiopia and could be read aloud to younger listeners. Profits from the book go to Oxfam's Ethiopian Famine Appeal.

The Lotus and the Grail, Rosemary Harris, ill. Errol le Cain, Faber, 0 571 13536 6, £3.95



Eighteen legends from different countries retold and reworked by Rosemary Harris. They are loosely bound together by the idea that the central character has a goal of some sort. The treatment of philosophical, psychological and moral ideas make this collection of particular interest to older readers who may well be engaged in their own quests for understanding. This paperback version has plain white stiff paper covers and a full colour wrap around dust jacket. Full colour illustration inside too.

The Oxford Book of Poetry for Children, compiled by Edward Blishen, ill. Brian Wildsmith, Oxford, 0 19 276058 0, £5.95

Edward Blishen's anthology, which was first published in 1963 and is a classic of its kind, has at last been issued in an amazing value-for-money paperback edition. In his introduction, addressed to the child reader, Edward Blishen describes the subject of poetry as 'whatever . . . can be expressed by human beings with a sense of words and of rhythm, a sharp eye, a keen ear, an enquiring mind and an open heart.' His selection is drawn from the traditional mainstream of English poetry (all pre 1930s) but there is rich variety here and, as many children have found over twenty years, lots of signposts to further pleasure. (One quibble: children today consulting the Index of Authors may gain the impression that several well-known poets – Masfield, Eleanor Farjeon, Eliot, for instance – are amazingly long-lived!)

Messages, compiled by Naomi Lewis, Faber, 0 571 13647 8, £2.95

A very positive welcome for this new anthology chosen with 11-15 year-olds in mind. Like Blishen, Naomi Lewis has grouped the poems under broad themes and, also like him, has headed many of these with a line of poetry. Many of the same poets (but not the same poems) appear as in the Blishen collection plus a distinctive presence of more recent writing. Familiar themes of Childhood, Time Passing, Death, Love, Animals are joined by less predictable ones: 'A Host of Furious Fancies', 'Angels, Demons, Phantoms, Dreams'; all to be explored in poems chosen with a sure sense of what will speak to the word-aware adolescent.

Poets in Hand, chosen by Anne Harvey, Puffin, 0 14 03.1818 6, £1.95

The Puffin Quartet of Poets (Eleanor Farjeon, James Reeves, E V Rieu and Ian Serrailier) brought together under Eleanor Graham's editorship has been a staple Puffin title for many years. It is now joined by Anne Harvey's five poets (Charles Causley, John Fuller, Elizabeth Jennings, Vernon Scannell and John Walsh) and like its companion should find a welcome in many classrooms and libraries. It is a skilful selection; poems for children which demonstrate the importance of words, the liberating discipline of form and rhythm. Five distinctive voices offering to readers and listeners (as Elizabeth Jennings says about *writing* poetry) 'another way of finding out about what life and the world means'. Anne Harvey's anecdotal introductions to each poet are informative and interesting.

Nothingmas Day, Adrian Mitchell and John Lawrence, Allison and Busby, 0 85031 533 6, £3.95

Last year the hardback; this year the paperback. Nearly fifty varied poems by Adrian Mitchell, many written as a direct result of working in schools with children. He plays with words, rhymes and forms in a collection which is amusing, diverting and thought-provoking. John Lawrence's wood engravings give the book an additional and engaging dimension. ●

How Serious Is It?

Rose Tremain's adult novels are highly acclaimed. *Journey to the Volcano* is her first book for children. Here she reflects on her approach to writing for younger readers.

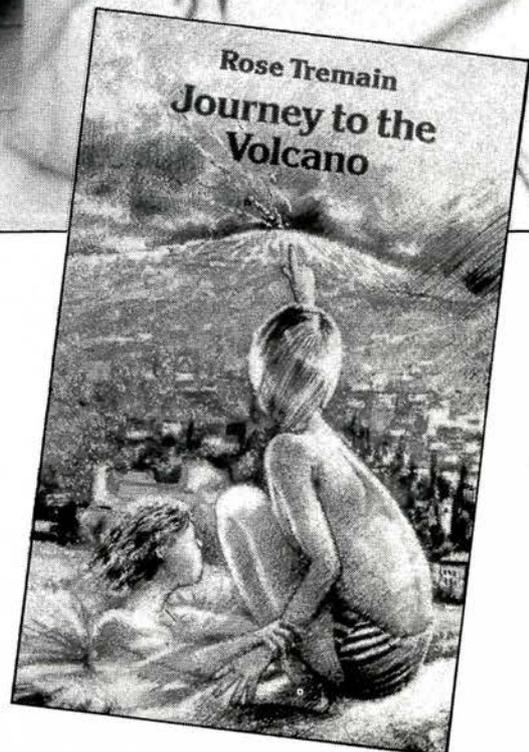
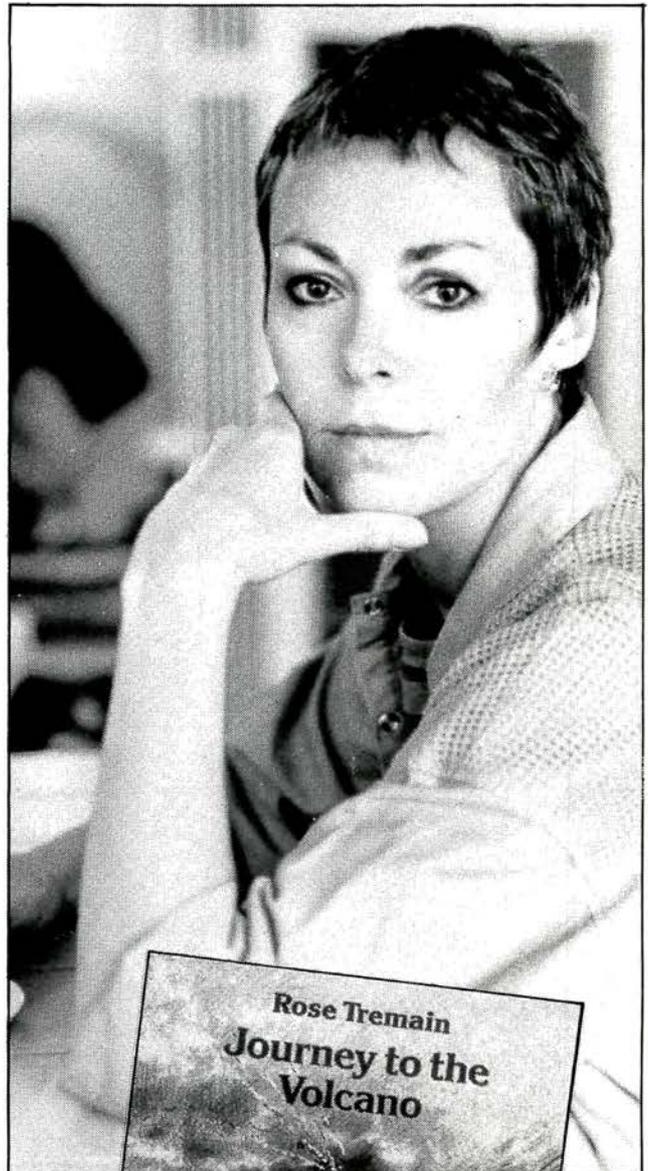
In a recent radio interview, I was asked, 'Is it difficult to make the transition to children's books from serious literature?' I had expected the question – or a question something like it – but not the word 'serious' in there. It irritated me. It implied that writing fiction for children was somehow not serious, or at any rate that I didn't take it seriously. I replied that the transition as I saw it was not from serious fiction to non-serious fiction, but from serious fiction of a complex, many-layered genre to another *kind* of serious fiction, more simple, more constrained, tidier and shorter, but still with an overtly serious purpose – to delight and to illuminate.

My recent (adult) novel, *The Swimming Pool Season*, is primarily a story about love, but it is also a story about families, about belonging in families, about the ways in which people's sense of belonging – to families, relationships, places and ideas – alter and constrain their sense of themselves and their aspirations. *Journey to the Volcano*, the first book I completed (not the first I've started) for children, has these very same concerns at its centre. I chose as my central character a young boy, George Lewis, who finds himself in the middle of a 'tug of love' between his reserved but loyal English father and his more volatile and emotional Sicilian mother. The book follows George and his mother to Sicily and charts George's attempts to fit in with and learn the ways of his extended Sicilian family – his efforts, in fact, to *belong* to them, while at the same time worrying about his father left alone with a dull job and an empty house in London. It's a 'journey book', not only in the sense that George does in fact travel to a different culture and encounters all kinds of behaviours and customs that he doesn't fully understand, but also in the sense that both George and his parents journey towards a better understanding of each other's concerns and priorities and of the complexity of the emotional ties which bind them not only to each other, but also to friends and relations outside the little nuclear family.

I think it would have been possible – and this would be my extended answer to the interviewer who categorised children's fiction as non-serious – to have taken virtually the same plot-line and the same characters and made an adult novel from them. In choosing to write this story for younger readers, however, I also realised that my approach to the actual writing of the book would have to be very different and that much of the trickery and experimentation that helps make the writing of novels such an absorbing endeavour would have to be set aside before starting. My editor at Hamish Hamilton, David Grant, was diligent in pointing out the traps into which 'main list' authors can fall if they assume that writing children's fiction after writing adult novels is likely to be easy. It isn't easy, in my opinion, because so many of the tools the novelist employs, particularly the use of metaphor and verbal games, no longer help the story forward and are therefore inappropriate. Instead of taking up a position *outside* the narrative, the better to embellish it, the children's writer has, somehow, to burrow into the narrative, making absolutely certain that it arrives in recognisable shape, that no false trails are followed unless they are clear ones and that tight control is maintained.

One reviewer has said of my adult novels that not a great deal happens in them because 'emotion is action', i.e. what the characters feel and the shifts and changes in those feelings carry the narrative forward, and this may be more true than I'm disposed to believe. What is certain is that in setting out to write a book for children, I was in no doubt about the importance of *happenings*, and here, I think, lies the single great difference of approach. In constructing a novel, I never construct a plot; the plot emerges, always with the characters leading. In constructing *Journey to the Volcano*, I sat down and thought out the plot from beginning to end and forced the characters to come with me and bring that plot about. Once or twice, the characters became mulish (notably the rather anarchic character, Norridge, George's English grandfather) and refused to follow where I led, but in the main, they came with me from Point A to Point Z and the story I'd intended to tell was told.

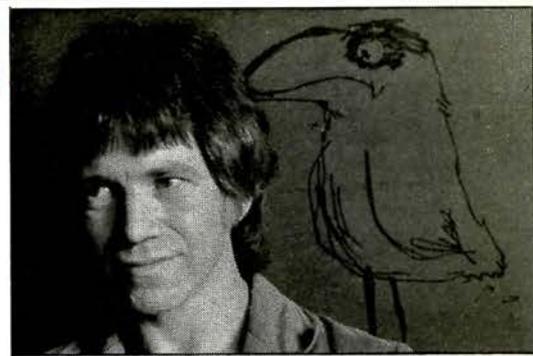
I'm now about to begin another children's book. It's interesting to note at this point that although I have three-quarters of the story in my head, I don't have an ending. The question I need to ask myself is, shall I make certain I know what the ending is before I start, or shall I – in the high-risk way that I like to write novels – 'earn' the ending in the process of writing the story? It's possible that having completed one book for children (thus reassuring myself that I can do it) I'm now disposed to work on the next one in a more dangerous way. If I do this, will the next book be less successful than *Journey to the Volcano*, or will it have an extra little dimension that will make it more compelling? A difficult question, surely. Easy it isn't. Serious it is. ●



Journey to the Volcano, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11651 1, £5.95.

Authorgraph No.35

Tony Ross



Tony Ross is a happy man.

'I wake up every morning aware of how lucky I am, earning a good living at what I actually enjoy. Yes, I do a lot of work, but it isn't really work. My father was with ICI all his life – that's work; carrying bricks – that's work; going down pits, digging farmland on cold mornings – that's work. But sitting in a studio doing little drawings – that's marvellous!'

This sounds like a very moral person. 'If you've got four kids you must be. All the people I've dealt with have always been dead square and honest with me – I don't believe the world is made up of sharp people out to trick you and cash in on you. Start lying and all the ramifications of trickery, and everything falls apart.

'I haven't got an agent, and I don't even read contracts – in fact, I often finish a book before I've got a contract, especially with the French, because they work so slowly and I work so fast. Publishing people are really very nice down to a T, or perhaps it's children's books people?

'Anyway, I don't put a value on what I do. I enjoy it, and sell it if someone makes an offer, and give it away if not. I just do the pictures, good pictures or bad pictures, and let the publisher lord it over his province. I don't fret over artwork not being returned or lost in exhibitions and so on – some people care to distraction, but I don't. I'll do another drawing: I'm not dead yet.'

It's no surprise, then, that fairy tales with their morals attract him. 'Also, apart from the fact that they present a ready-made idea, they come out of the past, they're part of history, and I love history in its simplest, broadest sense. I'm interested in their universal quality – Red Riding Hood, for instance, exists in 300 versions, and was a simple way, in the days when towns were small places surrounded by forests, of telling little girls it was dangerous to go into those forests.'

The depth of his interest is clear in the potent and delightful *The Enchanted Pig*. 'Well, there are many stories of women marrying animals. Essentially it's a warning to young girls that men can have a bestial side and a nice side, and that appearances can be misleading. The Pig changes to a Prince at night, so in bed making love he's gentle, while the rest of the time he's a bit of a beast. And it also says you can't rope a man or he'll be off, and when he's off you can't easily get him back: you have to work at it, even suffer, but having gone through all that it can be better than it was before. I think that's sound!

'I do sometimes alter the moral – a Dutch publisher complained to me that *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* has evil triumphing when the wolf eats everyone. But the boy is a little liar, and the adults indulged in the worst kind of finger-wagging, whereas the wolf is a clean, tidy, honest, wolf-like wolf – there is essential goodness regardless of outer form.'

Today Tony Ross is a highly successful artist whose work, in his own books and other people's, at times seems ubiquitous, while simultaneously holding a senior lecturer's post at Manchester Polytechnic. He gave up the headship of the illustration group, when he felt he had done it too long, had sat in judgement over too many people, sat in too many meetings instead of teaching. But as a youngster he had never thought of a career in art, and fell into it (he says) only when it seemed he wasn't up to anything else.

He was born in 1938 in Wandsworth, south London, but moved during the war to Cheshire. He ended up at the Liverpool Regional College of Art after despairing of working with his

first love – horses. Cowboy, jockey, mounted policeman – anything to do with horses – these were his dreams; then at 17 he wrote to John Wayne, offering to make his own way over if he could just be in a western. There was no reply. He reckons it's still the Wayne-syndrome, the dazzle of the stage (father a conjuror, uncles as film extras), that makes him love to put on an act in his talking-and-drawing sessions with groups of kids.

He went into teaching after a bad day in an ad agency, where he was art director, and at first taught in all sorts of areas – design, advertising, typography. At that time he was drawing cartoons in magazines like *Punch*, *Town* or *Time & Tide*. He had seven tiny books accepted by the first publisher he approached, Fabri (later to be Thurman of Mister Men fame), and was introduced by a friend to Abelard & Schuman where he met Klaus Flugge who later, when he was starting up Andersen Press, rang him. *Goldilocks* was Andersen's first book, and Flugge and Ross have enjoyed a publishing love affair ever since.

'So I never had that baptism by fire of trudging stuff round the streets. Klaus is a smashing publisher. He has great sensitivity to how artists feel: it's a pleasure to work for him because he professes not to understand what you do, saying "Oh, you do it your way," while on the other hand he understands *exactly* what you're doing!'

Tony Ross was the first indication of Flugge's sure eye for artists of the future – today he's recognised in dozens of countries and has won a clutch of awards. 'I love awards! Holland's Silver Paintbrush', which he has just won yet again, 'really is a silver paintbrush and you can keep it. We hoped like mad our Towser films would get an award at BAFTA, even had our speeches worked out...'

It is still a grief to him that his parents cannot share his triumphs. 'I had dedicated a book to them which was printed in Italy and held up by the dock strike, and my mother died just hours before it got to England – it upset me that she never saw the dedication. My father saw it, but died less than two years later. I'll always believe it was from a broken heart...' he pauses, swallows and collects himself. 'It still gets me, that. He never saw the really better things happen to me, but he saw enough to know I was OK. But who knows, maybe they can see: I always live in hope, which is why I'm concerned with the future not the past.'

'I'm quieter now, not as an artist – as an artist I want to do noisier things – but as a person,' which is no doubt good news for Zoe, his third wife and very competent business partner. Now, she does read his contracts, although he tells her not to hassle people: it's the perfect partnership that allows his faith in human nature to stay undented – even when a client skipped the country, because his hard-headed business partner

performed miracles of detection and tracked him down.

They live out in the country, Macclesfield way, with Pip, George, Alex and Kate (three girls and a boy ranging from 17 to five), in a renovated Methodist chapel filled with other artists' work but only one of his – a mounted dragoon of 1840, a copy of a Victorian painting.

Copying great works for that marvellous little guide, the *Discoverers Painting*, which originated with Gallimard in France, had been fun. 'Wife with coffee: "What have you done this morning?" "Oh, a Derain and a Michelangelo, but I can't do Rembrandt!" "You've only been trying 20 minutes..." Some were very easy to copy – the old chaps I admire like Michelangelo and Leonardo, and the Magrittes just rolled off – but others were impossible, like Turner and Rembrandt.'

'I did my student thesis on Edward Lear, and had to make a copy of a Lear actually in the library: side by side they were indistinguishable! I must say, forgery did pass through my mind... And once, when I had an art dealer friend come to dinner, I drew a couple of Rowlandsons on brown fly-leaves torn from old books, used brown ink and distressed them, folded them and poured coffee on them, and stuck them behind the clock. She spent the evening trying to buy them off me!' He dissolves into laughter at the memory.

As soon as he mentions Lear and Rowlandson one can see the natural relationship with his own work. He says he is getting less spiky, that his latest illustrations for Corbett's *The End of the Tale* aren't spiky at all and are unlike anything he's done before, and that his line drawings change a lot because they are for other, very different, writers. His style is certainly more varied than the slightly frenzied cartoons associated with his name: he illustrated the letter E for the French Gallimard Dictionary and charmed thousands with his collaborations with Bernard Stone. Boisterously, almost impatiently, he experiments and

searches for new frontiers. 'I'm free to do what I like; as a designer and typographer I can control and design and divide my own page. I like the form of a book to *do* things, the covers and endpapers to add point, make the reader puzzle and be excited.'

He dreams of writing children's thrillers (but they'd take longer 'with all the writing and spelling!'); meanwhile he's done a pop-up with David Pelham and the Towser series of books, strip-cartoon and TV films. Casual party talk with fellow Andersen artist David McKee, of King Rollo, lured him into film-making.

Towser is made by cut-paper animation, a sort of flat paper puppet with lots of heads and legs for different positions. Based on nothing but optimistic speculation, the enterprise snowballed from one pilot to three, then six, then a series of 13, and finally a second series. Now Towser is seen in 30 countries (changing his name – he's Mackintosh in France, Rudolpho in Spain... *Rudolpho?*) and is on the brink of a marketing bonanza steered by the same company as Postman Pat.

Unexpectedly, he thinks this is a good time for his students to face the world.

'When jobs were plentiful, illustrators never got work because they were freelance, but when there are fewer jobs, it's freelancers who have the advantage of hope. There's a lot going on in most forms of illustration now, and it's a good time for cavaliering – let's go to London and give it a crack! My friends left college with a degree which aimed them like an arrow in the direction they should take; I left art college with a much riskier future, but I really enjoyed the "Let's try this and that" feeling – building sites, chemical factories, laboratories as well as art work. But over three years you get to know your students well, and you do worry about them. I try to make them painfully aware of *luck*, so they can put a failure down to luck rather than lack of talent.'

'Then I look at their talents and I think, God, if I can do it, they can!'

The Books

(published by Andersen Press unless otherwise stated)

The Boy Who Cried Wolf,
0 86264 091 1, £4.95

The Enchanted Pig, 0 86264 002 4,
£4.95

The End of the Tale (W. J. Corbett),
Methuen, 0 416 51760 9, £6.50

Goldilocks and the Three Bears,
0 905478 00 2, £4.95; Sparrow,
0 09 929850 3, £1.50 pbk

Lazy Jack, 0 86264 107 1, £4.95

Little Red Riding Hood,
0 905478 37 1, £4.95 (available early
1986); Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.314 5,
£1.25 pbk

The Tale of Admiral Mouse
(Bernard Stone), 0 86264 009 1, £4.95

Terrible Tuesday (Hazel Townson),
0 86264 098 9, £4.95

Towser and Sadie's Birthday,
0 86264 049 0, £1.95; Picture Lions,
0 00 662359 X, £1.50 pbk

Towser and the Funny Face,
0 86264 077 6, £1.95

Towser and the Haunted House,
0 86264 079 2, £1.95

Towser and the Magic Apple,
0 86264 078 4, £1.95

Towser and the Terrible Thing,
0 86264 050 4, £1.95

Towser and the Water Rats,
0 86264 051 2, £1.95; Picture Lions,
0 00 662361 1, £1.50 pbk

This is only a selection from the large number of Tony Ross titles in print.

Making Books Exciting

Accounts of two recent attempts to bring books alive for children, to arouse their interest and encourage them to read.

The Children's Book Week Train – running out of steam?

Moira Andrew is the headteacher of a school in Severn Beach, a village about ten miles from the centre of Bristol. The school seizes every opportunity to encourage children to be interested in books and become committed and enthusiastic readers. So when the news of the Book Week Train came round, Severn Beach was one of the first schools to book a place to be there to greet it when it pulled into Temple Meads station in Bristol.

Mary Hoffman's enthusiastic account in the **TES** of the start of the Book Week Train's nationwide tour on Saturday, 12th October whetted everyone's appetite still more. At Euston, Milton Keynes and York the excitement had been high: authors everywhere, reading, talking, signing books, platforms buzzing with activity, champagne flowing and thousands of children enjoying themselves hugely and buying books. If this had been conceived primarily as a media event, it seemed the children weren't going to lose out.

Friday, 18th October was the last but one day of the Book Train's journey. After Plymouth and Exeter it was due to arrive in Bristol at 5.00 pm. After school Moira Andrew and her deputy with a coachload of children bubbling with anticipation set off for Temple Meads.

She describes for us what happened.

At the end of a long Friday, and a long week, my deputy and I took a party of children by coach to the bleak platform of Temple Meads station. We arrived in good time, full of anticipation.

Due to some technical hitch at the British Rail end, the train was forty-five minutes late. This was not the fault of the organisers, but no contingency plans had been made to cope with such a situation. Eventually we were all packed, tight as sardines, into the British Rail board room, all air and enthusiasm gradually ebbing, where Terry Jones did a marvellous job reading his story against the odds as more and more people were squeezed in. The British Rail board room will never be the same again – its sides may have been permanently stretched and it must have taken a ton of elbow grease to restore the long table to its original glory.

In the best union tradition of first in, last out, we found ourselves at the end of a long queue of book-enthusiasts when the train was finally announced. We had to battle our way forwards, losing half the children en route!

However, our real disappointment was still to come. We were shovelled on to the rear of the train into a narrow crowded bookshop. Before we had time to do as much as glance around, another hundred or so people were packed in and we were moved inexorably forward into a second bookshop – and on into a third, where the W H Smith tills gobbled up the children's pocket money. There was by now a seething mass of people, many of whom could not get near enough to handle a book, let alone browse among them.

Tony Davies, my deputy, tumbled out of the coach with those children who had managed to buy a book and I was left inside trying frantically to identify those left aboard. Helping them to *choose* a book was out of the question.

In the half-dark we lined the children up and counted them. To our horror, one was missing, so it was back into the maelstrom of the bookshop, where I found her clutching a book, waiting to pay for it at the end of a long and tortuous queue.

All this time we had not yet sighted a writer (with the sole exception of the brave Terry Jones). 'What about the authors?' the children kept asking. Peering through the gloom, we spied them huddled behind a table on the cold station platform, the frail, elderly Rev. Awdry included!

By this time most of the children had felt hustled into buying the nearest book, and had no pocket money left for these authors' books which were on sale on the platform.

Martyn Goff and Mike Read help paint the Book Train.



Our coach had now been waiting for us for quite some time. We were cold, tired and very disappointed, so we spoke briefly to the shivering authors and made our way home.

From the preliminary blurb, we got the impression that the writers would be on board the train, either reading to groups of children or available to answer their questions – not on a draughty platform in the dark!

We are very interested in books and writers, in story-tellers and illustrators, and do all we can to encourage children to read for pleasure. This battle on board the Book Train did nothing towards this aim. It was simply a mammoth sales extravaganza on behalf of W H Smith, booksellers.

The cost of the coach and the teachers' precious out-of-school time was entirely wasted but, more importantly, the Book Train did not live up to its promise as far as the *children* were concerned. Their disillusionment will do little towards bringing children closer to books and to their authors.

Chris Powling on the Book Train.



Chris Powling spent a day on the Book Train and also appeared at the Wessex Book Fair. We asked him for his impressions.

'I arrived at Hereford to join the train at about 9.30 in the morning. The train was already in the station and the organisers from the NBL with helpers from the local W H Smith were already setting out stalls and activities on the platform. There were games to play based on books and costume characters: Postman Pat, Fungus the Bogeyman and a talking robot which proved to be a great success with the kids. They arrived at about ten and for an hour and a half there was a lively buzz of activity with everyone enjoying themselves. "We authors" sat at tables on the platform with our books and talked happily to anyone who approached, answered questions and signed our autographs in books - our own and other people's! - on bits of paper or anything else that was thrust at us.

It took a long time for the train to get to Cardiff and when we arrived (late) after lunch some children were already waiting. Some of us left the train and went to do a bit of "busking" for the queue while the organisers got the platform ready. Everyone was in good spirits and the hour and a half stop went off very well. There was lots going on and on the whole it seemed to generate a lot of excitement and pleasure.

We were due at Swansea at 5.30 but the train was late again. Hundreds of kids were waiting. I could only stay for half an hour (I had a train to catch!) but they seemed to be getting things organised when I left. I wish I could have stayed. I very much enjoyed my day with the train; in the places we stopped I felt that I had been part of something that was really making books come alive for children.

The Wessex Book Fair was fantastically well organised and a huge success. I visited the book fair in the Recreation Centre which was open to the general public and also did sessions with children which the library service had arranged. I've done a lot of author appearances in the past few years; this was definitely above par. The children had read my books (!) and had lots to say and ask about them. It was a most enjoyable thing to be involved in. Michael Lawrence is the sort of local bookseller every town should have. He's worked hard at building up relationships with schools via school bookshops and he put an enormous amount into the book fair - not least a considerable sum of money from the business. The fact that he didn't make a loss on the event is a tribute to his faith in the idea of

taking books to people. The book fair had a tremendously exciting atmosphere; there was always something going on. I'm sure everyone who came *must* have gone away feeling positive about books!



Chris Powling and audience at Wessex Book Fair.

Wessex Book Fair

At the end of October books came to Winchester in a big way. For three days the Recreation Centre and St Bede's School were packed with visitors to the Wessex Book Fair which was organised jointly by Hampshire County Library and Michael Lawrence of Michael Harrington Ltd booksellers. The fair ran on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and in all about 6,000 people came to taste its wares and to carry away their purchases in the shape of £10,000 worth of books. Two drama groups performed; Roald Dahl signed books and presented prizes; Val Biro brought Gumdrop; Fungus the Bogeyman put in appearances; Weston Woods and Reva Lee videos were shown continuously.

On the two school days the Hampshire Schools Library Service organised sessions in which groups of children visiting the fair were able to listen to authors talking. In all 2,000 children from 66 schools were involved and ten authors including Douglas Hill, Jan Mark, Hazel Townson, Dick King-Smith and Chris Powling came to meet their readers. (All classes booked for a session with an author had been reading and talking about the books in preparation.) Meticulous organisation by Anne Marley of the County Library Service ensured that everyone was in the right place at the right time and everyone went home smiling.

The organisers hope to repeat the event in two years' time. ●

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Walker Books Ltd, 184-192 Drummond Street, London NW1 3HP.

SOUND & VISION

Running Scared – a new television serial by Bernard Ashley



Julia Millbank as Paula with Amarjit Dhillon as Narinder. BBC TV photograph.

Bernard Ashley's stories of children and adults caught up in tense and emotionally demanding situations are well-known. One of them, **Break in the Sun**, was previously adapted as a serial for BBC children's television. Now Paul Stone, the producer of that series, has persuaded Bernard Ashley to write his first original screenplay.

Running Scared is set in London's East End – between the Woolwich Ferry and the Barking Road. It's an exciting crime story which takes in protection rackets and robberies. As the story starts Charlie Elkin, who controls this particular patch of the London underworld, sets out to convince a small jeweller that 'when you get offered protection you take it. It's like insurance, a little monthly outlay, my old son, and nasty things like this don't happen.' But things go wrong when the getaway car breaks down and the villains, including Charlie, jump into Sam Butler's taxi. There's a chase, a crash and Charlie escapes leaving his spectacles behind him broken in two. The police pick up one half, Sam finds the other in his taxi and decides the

best way to protect himself and his family is to hide it away.

Charlie wants the missing lens, so do the police in the shape of Inspector McNeill: together the spectacles can identify Charlie as efficiently as fingerprints. The tug of war which ensues involves Paula Prescott, Sam's grand-daughter, and her best friend Narinder whose Sikh family are also being threatened by Charlie's gang. And the story grows even more complicated with Sam's death and Paula's discovery that not all her family are on the right side of the law. What began as a crime thriller increasingly involves questions of loyalty and justice. At the climax Paula is faced with a final painful decision which she has to make alone.

The series has been shot entirely on location and should keep its audience chained to the screen throughout the six episodes.

Published to coincide with the start of the series early in the new year is a

novel also written by Bernard Ashley. Working in television has been good for him – the novel is well-written, as we've come to expect; but this one has a clear and powerful narrative voice, racy and pacy, shifting in and out of the situations and emotions which enclose the characters in a way that pulls the reader along inexorably. It's tightly constructed, very readable and – a tribute to a writer who now, like Jan Needle, seems at home in both genres – bears no obvious signs of its origins in another medium.

The details of family life, of the friendship between Paula and Narinder, of the East End setting are so well realised that you believe the rest as well. How come Bernard Ashley knows so much about the criminal life? And him a headmaster too.

Running Scared is published in hardback by Julia MacRae, 0 86203 238 5, £7.50, and in paperback by Puffin, 0 14 03.2079 2, £1.95.

TIME FOR A STORY

The first ten programmes in this excellent new series for infants were broadcast this term. Ten more will be transmitted early next year. If you haven't caught up with it yet, look out for it at the beginning of next term.

The series, from Granada, aims 'to provide a rich variety of story themes and styles which can extend those children with experience of books as well as encourage and stimulate those whose experiences have

been more limited'. Each programme lasts ten minutes. In that time Bill Oddie grabs the viewer's attention and creates an appropriate context for introducing and reading a story. The format is simple but very effective. All the stories are original; the first ten were written by well-known and talented authors: Hazel Townson, Grace Hallworth, Hiawyn Oram and Tony Ross. No constraints on style or of controlled vocabulary were placed on them; they were asked simply to write stories of about 500

words for children 4-6. Each story is available in book form with full colour illustration and there is also an audio-cassette with Bill Oddie reading all ten. It is not envisaged that all children will be able to read the texts – though some will – but they should enjoy listening and following the text, joining in with, for example, some of the dialogue or with repeated phrases.

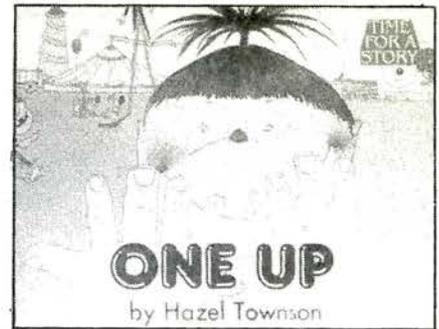
The excellent teacher's booklet which accompanies the series contains among other things a useful analysis of the vocabulary used for those planning supported reading activities. It was written by Margaret Clark and Wendy Dewhirst who acted as advisers to the series. The notes for each programme outline content and rationale and include suggestions for follow-up and extension. Other stories, poems and songs with a similar theme are listed.



Bill Oddie

Details of the Spring Term programmes and copies of the Teacher's Booklet (95p) can be had from: The Education Officer, Granada TV, Manchester M60 9EA.

The books in sets of ten (£4.50) and the



cassette (£3.50) can be ordered from: Mercury Music Ltd, 'Time for a Story', P O Box 194, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8TZ. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to Mercury Music Ltd, and please add 35p to cover postage and packing.



Gulliver – hero of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* – waded ashore on Lilliput after his boat, The Antelope, was wrecked on 5th November 1699. In 1859 a different Antelope ends up on the rocky shore of an English seaside town. The survivors of this wreck are three Lilliputians, the only remaining members of the crew which set sail in the second Antelope to follow the Gulliver charts and conquer the Land of the Giants. These three tiny people – two men and a woman – are found by Gerald and Philippa, two children on holiday with their grandfather.

So begins Willis Hall's new thirteen-part television series for Granada scheduled to be shown in the new year.

The adventures of the small but spirited trio with the children, in particular the need to avoid the clutches of the sinister Harwell Mincing who is eager to put the Lilliputians into his freak show, provide ample opportunities for special effects photography. Encounters with the cat, the vacuum cleaner and pink blanchmange are but three excitements for the Borrower-like three.

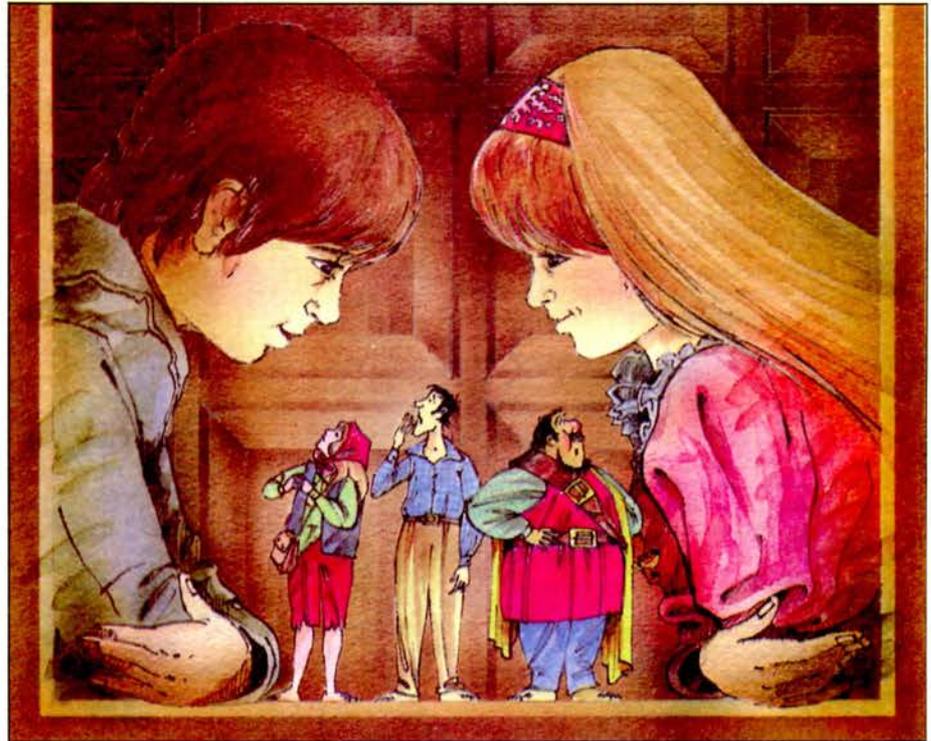
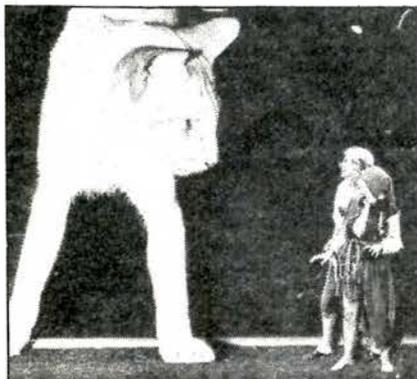


Illustration by Rowan Barnes-Murphy for the cover of Bodley Head's *Return of the Antelope*.

Two film stills courtesy of Granada Television.

A novel, *Return of the Antelope*, based on the series and written by Willis Hall himself is available from Bodley Head (0 370 30693 7, £5.50). A picture book version with illustrations by Faith Jaques and text by Mary Hoffman is published by Heinemann (0 434 94201 4, £5.95).



Bertha Books

Deutsch are hoping that Bertha, star of the new BBC TV series from Woodland Animations, will become as popular as Postman Pat (created by the same film company). The thirteen-part series started in September and is due to be repeated before long. So far two books have appeared based on Ivor Wood's original TV designs. The stories are by Eric Charles and the illustrations by Steve Augarde.

Bertha and the Great Painting Job, 0 233 97813 5, £2.50

Bertha and the Windmills, 0 233 97814 3, £2.50

A Benny Collection

Yorkshire TV's series for children about Benny who lives with Bella and Jack on Midsummer Common has led to an annual-type collection of stories, games, crosswords, information and jokes – all about Benny. The book, *Benny – The Story of a Dog* (Collins, 0 00 184090 8, £4.95), has been written and put together by Diana Wilmer, creator and presenter of the original series. Looks like good Christmas fodder for young dog lovers. ●

AWARDS

THE SMARTIES PRIZE

The first Grand Prix winner of the most valuable prize in the world of children's books is

Gaffer Samson's Luck by Jill Paton Walsh

Earlier this year the NBL announced that Rowntree Mackintosh were to sponsor a prize to encourage high standards in books for children of primary school age.

The judges – Bernard Ashley, Michael Aspel, Sarah Greene, Peggy Heeks and Nanette Newman – chose winning books in three categories, and then selected an overall winner to receive the £7,000 top prize (other winners received £1,000 each).

Gaffer Samson's Luck, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80122 4, £6.50, was first in the Over-7s category. The judges said of it:

'The first Smarties Prize has celebrated the richness of children's literature. **Gaffer Samson's Luck** is a story as deceptively simple as the Fenland landscape it describes. An adventurous story of a boy seeking to belong in a new environment, encompassing youth and age, "image" and courage. A novel from an experienced author written with the intensity of a first novel.'

James and his family move from Yorkshire to the Fens and at his new school he finds a cold and unfriendly reception – except for Angey who is an outsider herself. Will he ever be accepted as 'village'? He makes a friend of Gaffer Samson who is old and ill and lives in the next door cottage; Gaffer has lost his good luck charm and desperately needs to find it so he can give it away. James begins the search and accepts a dangerous dare.

This is an adventure story in the best sense; strong characterisation and a tense and involving narrative. Themes of belonging and mistrust, youth and age are made accessible to young readers in a very satisfying story.

Winner in the Under-7 category

It's Your Turn, Roger!, Susanna Gretz, Bodley Head, 0 370 30621 X, £5.25

Roger, the pig, explores the life-styles of his neighbours and finds that home is not such a bad place, even if you do have to help with the chores.

Winner for Innovation

Watch it Work! The Plane, Ray Marshall and John Bradley, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80695 1, £7.95

A move towards educational pop-up books. The texts, diagrams and mechanics work together in an informative and entertaining book.

Other books shortlisted were:

I'll Take You to Mrs Cole!, Nigel Gray and Michael Foreman, Andersen, 0 86264 105 5, £5.95

Another story about life-styles. For the narrator, Mrs Cole's 'dirty, noisy house' turns from a threat into a treat.



Below: Jill Paton Walsh, making her acceptance speech. She immediately thifted her prize money to the Band Aid Fund. Judges Michael Aspel, Peggy Heeks, Nanette Newman, Sarah Greene and Bernard Ashley look on.

See Mouse Run, Sally Grindley and Priscilla Lamont, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11567 1, £5.50

A cumulative story which eventually reveals what is frightening all the animals.

Fiona Finds Her Tongue, Diana Hendry, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 227 X, £2.95

One of the Blackbird series – about Fiona who finds it hard to speak up until she meets Tai from Vietnam who has no words at all.

My Aunt and the Animals, Elizabeth MacDonald and Annie Owen, Aurum Press, 0 906053 87 0, £3.95

A counting book with the months of the year and lots of animals.

The Finding, Nina Bawden, Gollancz, 0 575 03618 4, £6.95

Alex, a foundling, has his happy, ordinary life turned upside down. A moving, thoughtful story with mystery and suspense.

Drift, William Mayne, Cape, 0 224 02244 X, £6.95

A North American boy, an Indian girl and a bear in a remarkable and profound survival story.

The Final Test, Gareth Owen, Gollancz, 0 575 03699 0, £5.95

Two boys, one handicapped, both mad about cricket. A moving tale of friendship with a touch of mystery.

A Pair of Desert-Wellies, Sylvia Sherry, Cape, 0 224 02333 0, £6.95

More adventures of Rocky O'Rourke, the Liverpool lad who first appeared in **A Pair of Jesus-Boots**.

The Enchanted Palace, Ashim Bhattacharya and Champaka Basu, ill. Amanda Welch, Luzac, 0 7189 1000 1 (Bengali), 0 7189 1001 X (Greek), 0 7189 1002 8 (Hindi), £2.25 each

One of a new series of folk tales collected during the Reading Materials for Minorities research project. Bi-lingual text.

A Child's Garden of Verses, Robert Louis Stevenson, ill. Michael Foreman, Gollancz, 0 575 03727 X, £6.95

The master illustrator interpreting this classic collection in black and white and full colour.

The judges wanted also to commend:

The Nativity Play, Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 38300 3, £4.95

The Boy Who Cried Wolf, Tony Ross, Andersen, 0 86264 091 1, £4.95

The Princess and the Frog, A. Vesey, Methuen, 0 416 50300 4, £5.50

and

Tog the Ribber or Granny's Tale, Paul Coltman, ill. Gillian McClure, Deutsch, 0 233 97711 2, £5.95.

Janni Howker – a double winner

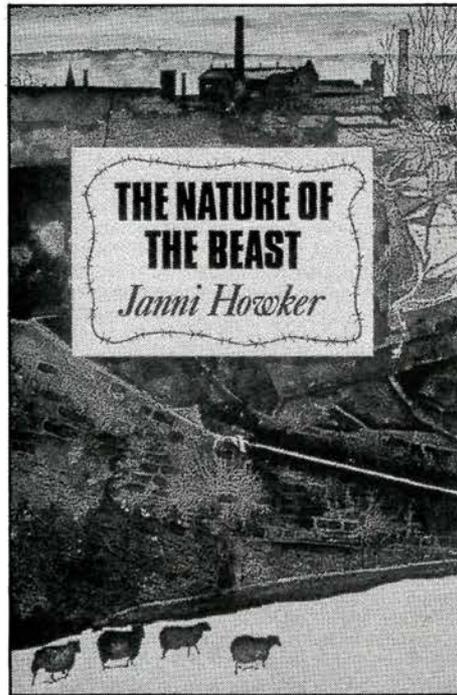
Janni Howker, the twenty-eight year old Lancashire writer who caused such a stir with her first book of short stories, *Badger on the Barge*, has won both the **Young Observer Teenage Fiction Prize** and the **Whitbread Nomination** for her first novel, *Nature of the Beast*, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 194 X, £6.95

As we commented in **Books for Keeps** earlier this year it is a remarkable book which manages to blend realism and symbolism with very powerful results. It is very much a story for our times which tells what happens to a Lancashire family when their town is threatened, first by mass redundancy when the local mill closes, then by a mysterious and murderous Beast on the loose in the countryside. The tale is told by teenager, Bill Coward, the only person who understands the real nature of the beast. The story follows his attempts to track down and kill it, and also to take some control of his own life, which the adult world has done its best to ruin.

Judges Beryl Bainbridge, Elaine Moss, Jack Ousby (Senior Schools Inspector for Nottingham), Jacqui Hayden (16-year-old winner of the **Young Observer** book critics competition) and Sue Matthias (editor of the **Young Observer**) selected Janni Howker for the £600 prize from nearly sixty books submitted this year.

Nature of the Beast was also the unanimous choice of judges, Bob Cattell, Philippa Pearce and David Wood, for the Children's Book Section of the Whitbread Award. It now goes forward with books from four other categories for the overall Whitbread Book of the Year award, worth £18,500, which will be announced on 28th January.

Other books on what the **Young Observer** judges referred to as 'a very strong shortlist' were:



The Cuckoo Sister, Vivien Alcock, Methuen, 0 416 52210 6, £6.50



Janni Howker.

The Fire of the Kings, Julian Atterton, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 189 3, £6.95

The War Orphan, Rachel Anderson, Oxford University Press, 0 19 271496 1, £6.95

The Other Side, Jacqueline Wilson, OUP, 0 19 271501 1, £6.95

Children of the Dust, Louise Lawrence, Bodley Head, 0 370 30679 1, £3.95 pbk

Also considered for the Whitbread nomination were:

Back Home, Michelle Magorian, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80670 6, £7.95

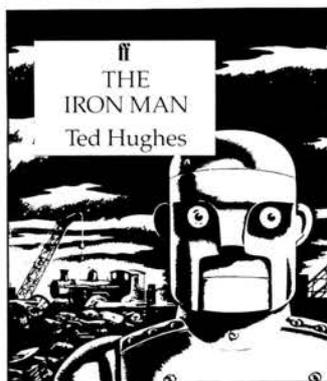
Nicobobinus, Terry Jones, Pavilion, 1 85145 000 9, £7.95.

The Emil Award

This is the fourth year of the Emil/Kurt Maschler Award given to 'a children's book in which text and illustration are both excellent and perfectly harmonious, each enhancing and balancing the other'.

The judges, Elaine Moss, Margaret Meek and Frank Delaney, have chosen as the winner:

The Iron Man by Ted Hughes in a new edition with illustrations by Andrew Davidson (Faber, 0 571 13675 3, £7.95 hbk and 0 571 13677 X, £1.95 pbk).



The judges said:

'**The Iron Man** is a modern myth, an adventure story powered by a machine-hungry robot who, far from being a threat to civilization, becomes the champion who saves it from destruction by an amorphous brooding evil from outer space.

The new Ted Hughes' masterpiece has been illustrated by Andrew Davidson. His wood engravings (tinted in the hardback edition) match the strength, energy and pathos of the text quite startlingly, and ensure that **The Iron Man** will continue to be recognised as a children's classic that challenges us all.'

The runners-up were:

The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me, Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake, Cape, 0 224 02999 1, £5.95

Shakespeare Stories, Leon Garfield and Michael Foreman, Gollancz, 0 575 03095 X, £8.95

The Wedding Ghost, Leon Garfield and Charles Keeping, OUP, 0 19 279779 4, £5.95

Chips and Jessie, Shirley Hughes, Bodley Head, 0 370 30666 X, £5.50

The Helen Oxenbury Nursery Story Book, Helen Oxenbury, Heinemann, 0 434 95602 3, £6.95

The judges said of the shortlist:

'From a large number of entries we selected six books – all very different – which represent the variety and ingenuity of writers and artists who recognise the needs of a new generation of readers in an age dominated by other media.'

The Reading Association of Ireland: Children's Book Award

A new award to promote the writing and publication of literature for Irish children. The award will be made every two years for a work of original prose fiction written and published in Southern Ireland.

The first winner is **Run with the Wind** by Tom McCaughren, Wolfhound Press.

It tells the story of a skulk of foxes and their fight for survival and on publication drew comparisons with **Watership Down** and **The Wind in the Willows**. **Run with the Wind** was published in the UK in September, £3.95 pbk.

'Good value for money' award

The Nonsense Verse of Edward Lear, illustrated by John Vernon Lord and published by Jonathan Cape (0 224 01794 2, £9.95), is the winner of the 1985 Redwood Burn Award. The award is given annually to one of the selected books in the British Book Design and Production exhibition for 'excellence in book production and outstanding quality and good value for money'. It is the first time that a children's book has been a recipient of this award and **The Nonsense Verse of Edward Lear** was chosen from 91 titles selected as the best produced and designed books published in the United Kingdom over the past year. ●

That Extra Something

Every season yet another wave of hopeful books breaks over us. Some good, some bad, a lot indifferent; many derivative, a few original. How to find those that might have staying power with children; that will stand being read over and over, that will open an eye or a mind a bit wider? Which, in short, are the books with that extra something? We are tipping these.

For the youngest you'll go a long way to beat Shirley Hughes' new series for Walker Books.

When We Went to the Park, 0 7445 0301 9, £1.95

is a counting book (to ten). It is also a story of a walk to the park with Grandpa, a marvellously crowded and event-filled reflection of suburban/small town living. Everything works, even the endpapers. **Bathwater's Hot** (0 7445 0300 0, £1.95) and **Noisy** (0 7445 0302 7, £1.95) deal in similar fashion with opposites and sounds.

Another artist who can surprise and delight with her originality is Jan Ormerod.

In **The Story of Chicken Licken**, Walker Books, 0 7445 0351 5, £5.95 she tells the traditional story in speech bubbles as a cast of children act out their version for an audience of families and friends. As the story unfolds on the brightly lit stage, more stories are happening in the silhouetted audience. Lots to engage the attention of young readers (and their parents).

For a more classic approach to traditional tales.

The Helen Oxenbury Nursery Story Book, Heinemann, 0 434 95602 3, £6.95

A collection of ten of the most popular childhood tales retold in a conversational storyteller's voice, just right for the age range. The illustrations – vignettes, half-page, full-page and double-spread – move surely between the reassuring and the deliciously frightening in a mix of soft yet strong tones. The whole is beautifully designed with generously sized and spaced type.

From the cover of **The Helen Oxenbury Nursery Story Book**, courtesy of Heinemann.



Lazy Jack, Tony Ross, Andersen, 0 86264 107 1, £4.95

For once there's no suggestion of disputing the publisher's blurb – 'Tony Ross is a master of the comic updated folk tale.' This time the updating is not so much in the illustration, which is sort-of eighteenth-century, as in the language. In any version this 'simpleton' tale is funny but the increasingly enraged invective of Jack's desperate mother had the juniors I shared this with rocking with laughter and squealing in delighted anticipation of the next outburst. 'Twit,' she cries; 'Gormless beetle brain,' she screeches; 'Nitwitted pinhead,' she shouts, as he proceeds calmly through the story following her advice exactly but in quite the wrong situation. The pictures, in which Jack is depicted as a resigned and hopeful tryer who never takes his hands from his pockets if he can help it, are Tony Ross at his deadpan best.



When the work was finished, the owner of the stable gave Jack a donkey as payment.

Remembering his mother's advice, Jack heaved the donkey onto his shoulders.

It was not easy, not easy at all, and Jack staggered away towards his home.

From **Lazy Jack**, courtesy Andersen Press.

Folk Tales defy age ranges and cross cultures. We've chosen several – individual versions and collections.

Legends of Earth, Air, Fire and Water, Eric and Tessa Hadley, Cambridge University Press, 0 521 26311 5, £5.95

In this their second collection of tales the Hadleys have brought together stories about the life-giving elements from five continents.



Left: 'The Birds circled happily over Asan a few times and then flew off into the distance.' From **The Magic Grove**, courtesy of Neugebauer Press.



From **Make a Face**, a Walker Books Red Nose Reader (see page 22).

Their versions are short and accessible but shaped always with respect for the voice of the original teller. There is joy, wonder, fear, warnings and regrets – all the traditional wisdom in fact of the cultures from which the stories came. A well-judged, thought-provoking introduction and some sensitively executed illustrations make this a particularly good volume for junior classes.

The Magic Grove, Libuše and Josef Paleček, Neugebauer Press, 0 907234 72 0, £5.95

A retelling of a traditional Persian tale which celebrates the virtues of love, friendship and unselfishness. The book is beautifully designed and the illustrations, while retaining a grave formality of design, are richly and sumptuously coloured.

Stories to Solve, George Shannon, ill. Peter Sis, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 235 0, £5.25

Not a colour in sight but that's no reason to pass over this very well designed collection of stories each of which sets the reader a problem or puzzle to solve. Peter Sis's black and white illustrations add to the pleasure of getting involved with these traditional international mysteries.

Wild Goose Lake, ill. Tord Nygren, Methuen, 0 416 54660 9, £5.95

This tale from south-west China has a strong and resourceful girl at the centre. It recounts how, with the help of the Dragon King's third daughter, Jade releases the jealously guarded waters of Wild Goose Lake so that her village can become fertile and prosper again. Magically beautiful pictures.

Maid of the Wood, Fiona French, Oxford, 0 19 279798 0, £5.95

Another tale which means more than it says. Four men create a woman from a piece of wood: the woodcarver makes the shape, the tailor dresses it, the jeweller adorns it, the holy man breathes life into it. As she rejoices at being alive the men start to argue over who owns her; she thanks them for creating her and goes on her way 'to see what the world is like'. Meanwhile the wolves still lurk in the corners of Fiona French's strong and atmospheric pictures.

Brock and the Dragon, Robin Klein, pictures by Rodney McRae, Hodder & Stoughton, 0 340 35490 9, £6.95

Another challenge to male and female stereotypes in a gently comic story. Brock, the king's third son, is very half-hearted about assuming his knight's heritage. 'I hate wearing armour. It's beastly hot inside and the view's limited.' But forth he is forced to go to slay dragons and rescue maidens. Lady Evadne is 'this year's sacrifice to the local dragon' but she's got no intention of being 'a meek little sacrifice like Lady Arabella last year and all the girls before her'. Exactly how they get together and what happens to the dragon (himself a bit reluctant) makes a very entertaining tale.

Harriet and William and the Terrible Creature, Valerie Carey, ill. Lynne Cherry, Andersen, 0 86264 119 5, £5.95

Harriet is another intrepid female – a squirrel – with a taste for adventure and space travel. Her twin brother prefers to stay at home and cultivate his garden. Meanwhile out in space Harriet discovers the TERRIBLE CREATURE chewing up rocks and spitting them out and weeping because he's destroyed all the flowers and trees. William's ecological soul is touched at the story and he returns with Harriet to help make the planet bloom again. A pleasantly moral tale with luscious pictures in which the squirrels appear in scale amidst tomatoes, sweet william, tulips and . . . monsters.

Two Monsters, David McKee, Andersen, 0 86264 122 5, £4.95

The latest of David McKee's fables for our time. Two monsters (one red, one blue), who live on either side of the mountain and never meet, find they disagree. From hurling verbal abuse they move to hurling rocks and verbal abuse and bigger rocks. As they stand face to face on a flattened landscape they suddenly find they agree after all. 'Pity about the mountain.' The message is unashamed and inescapable; the artist/author's line and language as funny and inventive as ever.

Once There Was a Tree, Natalia Romanova, pictures by Gennady Spirin, Andersen, 0 86264 111 X, £4.95

Also unashamedly didactic is this beautiful information/story book, which was originally published in Russia. The stump of a fallen tree is

colonised by a variety of different creatures, including man. Each thinks the stump belongs exclusively to him. 'The man thought he owned the forest – and the earth – so why not the tree stump?' But who really owns the tree stump?, asks the book. And provides the answer. Beautifully detailed and accurate paintings illustrate the text.

For new and developing readers

Who needs Ladybird or Ginn 360 when Ahlberg and McNaughton's **Red Nose Readers** are to hand from Walker Books?

Bear's Birthday, 0 7445 0255 1, and **Make a Face**, 0 7445 0252 7, £1.95 each

are just two of the first batch which should leave us shouting for more. Controlled vocabulary? Picture to text correspondence? Repetitive text? Predictable story line? Narrative shape? It's all here – along with abundant verbal and visual inventiveness and imagination. Lots of fun for all involved.



a happy bear



tickle tickle

From **Bear's Birthday**, a Walker Books **Red Nose Reader**.

There Was an Old Woman, Stephen Wyllie and Maureen Roffey, Methuen, 0 416 53200 4, £5.95

A new approach to flap books to involve and support the developing reader. The story of the old woman in the little white house is full of repeated words and phrases which consistently appear on the outside of little flaps. Under the flap is a picture to illustrate the word(s) above. The clever part is that the pictures change to fit the particular meaning of the context – so we see the 'old woman', the 'marmalade cat', the 'green shed' etc. as appropriate to the meaning of the story at that point. An ingenious way to involve readers with books and to illustrate what happens when we read.

Just to show we're not afraid of stereotypes (or realism?) here's one for the girls.

Opening Night, Rachel Isadora, Angus & Robertson, 0 207 15150 4, £4.95

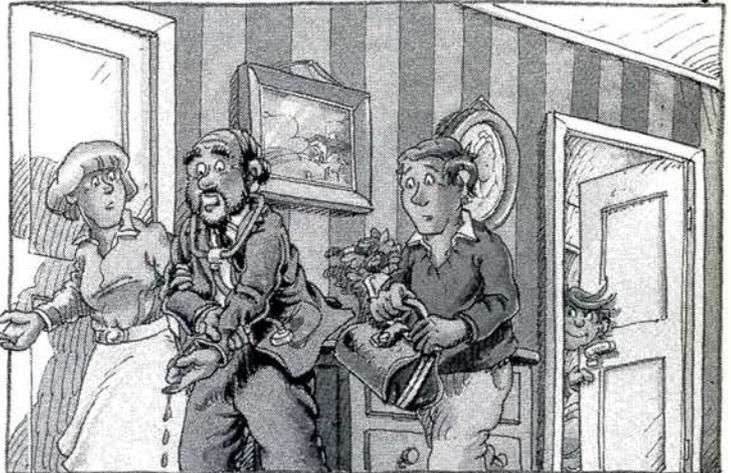
A ballet story par excellence to delight any aspiring dancer. Large soft focus pictures accompany a simple text which tells the story of Heather's first professional appearance. Lots of backstage detail. Very romantic but immensely satisfying for the right reader.



Robert hates being called 'little'.

'They tried everything. In the end they sent for the doctor. But that was no good. Robert bit him.'

From Philippe Dupasquier's **Robert the Great**.



And two for boys.

Robert the Great, 0 7445 0355 8
Robert and the Red Balloon, 0 7445 0356 6
Philippe Dupasquier, Walker, £3.95 each

The first two titles to feature Robert who deserves to become an established favourite with his own series. He's the stereotypical (archetypal?) boy with a stupendously messy bedroom. In the first of these two books Robert embarks on a determined and spectacular rebellion against being addressed as 'little', but Dupasquier has a neat turnaround in store for the reader. In **Red Balloon** Robert is bored but his balloon takes him on an imaginative journey and brings him a friend. Tidy storylines and short manageable texts with helpful speech bubbles, but the chief pleasure is in the detailed, crowded pictures where there always seems to be more to find and enjoy.

The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me, Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake, Cape, 0 224 02999 1, £5.95

Dahl at his inventive best again and Blake responding in similar vein. A long text but the extra large page size leaves the pictures room to make their contribution even within the standard 32-page format. Young Billy tells the story of the Ladderless Window Cleaning Company – monkey, giraffe and pelican – and how he, and they, meet the Duke of Hampshire – the richest man in England. Several adventures later Billy ends up with his heart's desire – his very own sweet shop, stocked of course from the great Wonka factory.

A real treasure house is

The Kingfisher Book of Children's Poetry, selected by Michael Rosen, Kingfisher, 0 86272 155 5, £5.95

An interesting mixture – put in your thumb and you'll likely come up with a plum and it probably won't be an over familiar old favourite either. Mike Rosen has ranged over time and space for this collection which in the manner of **The Rattle Bag** he has organised alphabetically by author with only Ballads, Limericks, Riddles, Nonsense and Boasts separated out by form at the end. One quibble – what a pity the full colour plates are located away from the poems they illustrate.

and another for fun

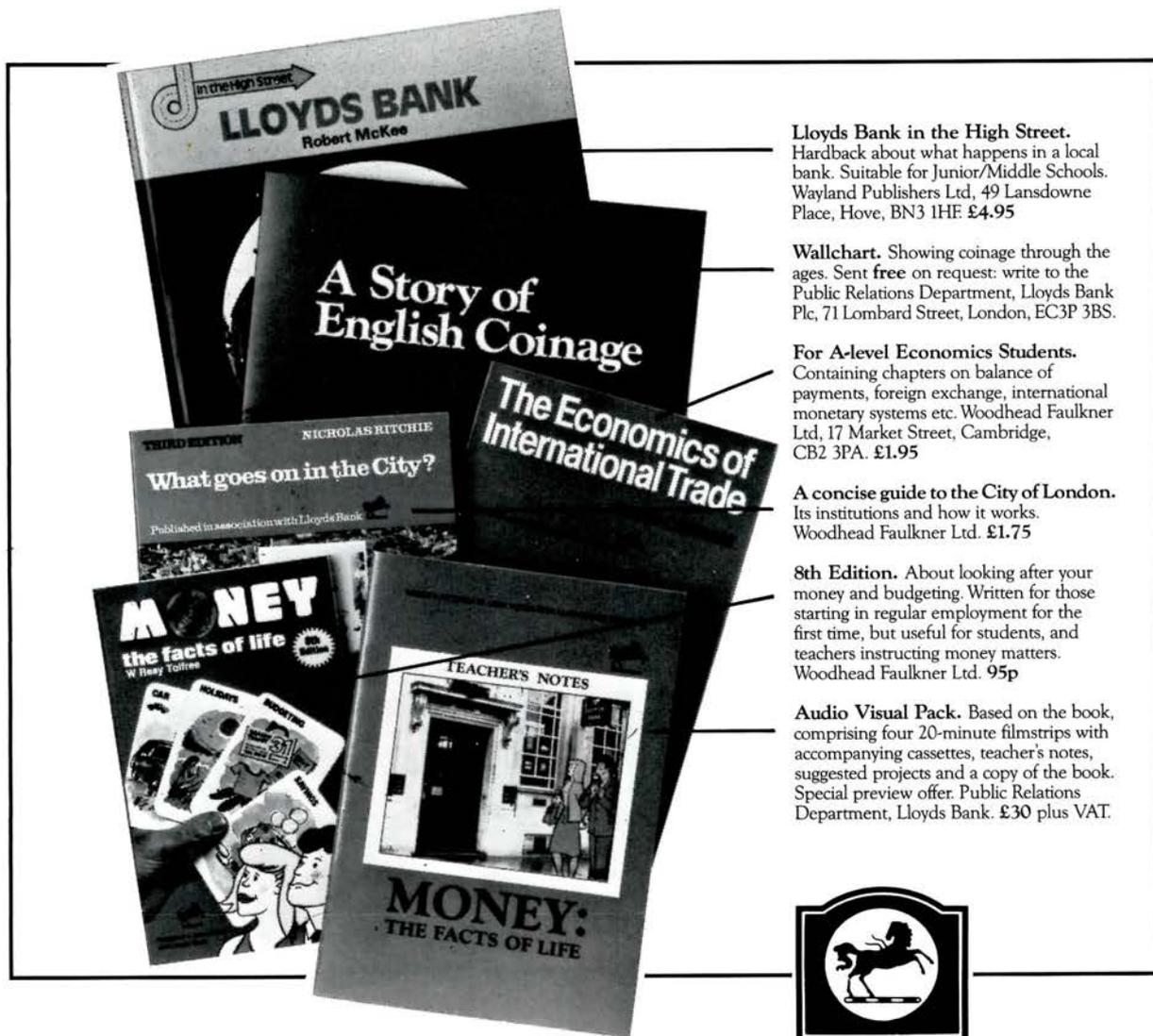
The Great Games Book, A & C Black, 0 7136 2741 7, £5.95

Fourteen board games devised and illustrated by well-known illustrators. Play (or read!) the **Amazing J Slingsby Grebe Gold Medal for Utter Brilliance Game** by Quentin Blake and John Yeoman, or **Bumbledon**, Tony Ross's clever variation on Wimbledon. Enjoy **Ludo** in the formal elegance of a great garden as designed by Angela Barrett, or pick your way through Satoshi Kitamura's maze to find **Cheese!** Lots of fun and a delightful way to become acquainted with some of our major illustrators. ●

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NEW LOOK AT CORGI

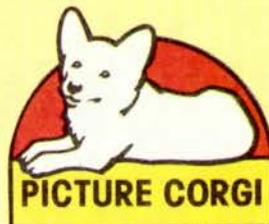
Back in the early seventies Corgi, part of Transworld Publishing, along with several other companies at that time (Fontana, Piccolo, Beaver, Sparrow et al), launched themselves into children's paperbacks with its Carousel imprint. Ten years on Corgi almost closed down their children's publishing; senior management knew that they had got it wrong but looked wistfully across the Atlantic at their extremely successful American partners, Bantam. Corgi's answer, a formula successfully instigated by imprints like Hippo, Beaver and Sparrow, was to import quality, editorial publishing experience and effective children's book marketing in the form of Ingrid Selberg (ex Fontana Lions, Usborne and Collins - where she was a senior editor) and Clare Somerville (ex Puffin and Fontana).

Editorial policy developed over the last few months is now conceived of as a two-pronged operation: retain the best of the already established popular commercial bits of the list (*Sweet Dreams*, *Sweet Valley High* and *Choose Your Own Adventure* - all under the Bantam banner) and add more mass-market, highly commercial publishing, mostly with media/toy tie-in potential (like *Sindy*, *Transformers* and *Dragon Warriors*) and then, most important of all, embark on some serious, quality children's book publishing. Hence we now have Picture Corgis (with Shirley Hughes, Frank Asch, Judy Brooks, Stephen Kellogg and H. E. Todd appearing on this list), Young Corgis and Corgis. So far it's Picture Corgis that have been developed fastest and are most visible. There are plans for fiction publishing but it's harder to find.

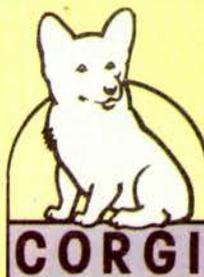
This is a conscious balancing act, with a strong commitment to quality books. Some would hold that it's the *only* way forward for a publisher who wants to survive in the children's book business.

What makes the Corgi approach especially interesting is their unabashed attitude to the popular, mass-market (a misleading term if ever there were one but which publishers seem addicted to) end of their list. *Transformers* (as comics, cartoons and principally as toys) is Very Big Business and is predicted to remain so well into 1987. Think of it as a mechanical, futuristic cousin to the now familiar dungeons and dragon scenarios. These warrior robots in disguise, now in adventure game book form, could have the same enticing-to-books effect.

Ditto *Sindy* books. Did you know that over twenty million pounds worth of the now 21-year-old doll and her accessories is sold worldwide?! That 89% of girls between three and twelve have 'spontaneous awareness' of *Sindy*, and 100% have 'prompted awareness'! *Sindy*, unlike *Barbie* - described to us as unashamedly West Coast and a bit tarty, is 'everybody's playmate'. She's an aspiration toy (a



PICTURE CORGI



CORGI



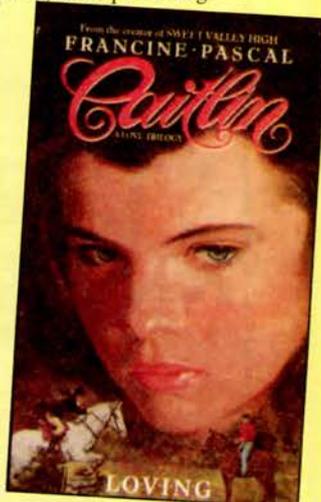
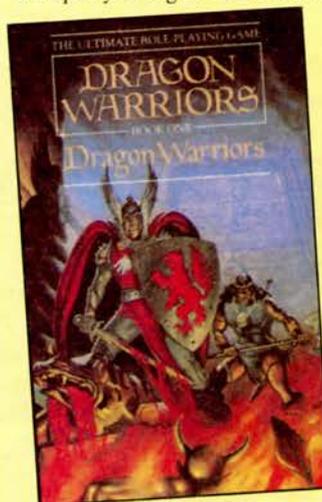
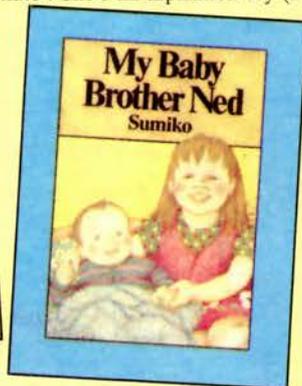
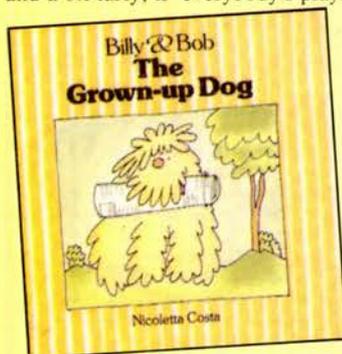
YOUNG CORGI



BANTAM

wonderful toy trade term) who's modern, career minded. She's even achieved that rare status of mother to daughter brand loyalty. It's worth just mentioning all this to put the books into some perspective and to get a clearer understanding of the Corgi policy to intensively commercial children's book publishing. They say you simply cannot avoid or ignore these days the all-pervasive presence of licensed toy products which soak up vast amounts of disposable income spent on children. Books should be in there pitching, indeed Corgi reckon they represent excellent value at £1.95 when compared to *Sindy*'s loo costing £2.45 and *Sindy*'s country manor at £65. Neither should books seek to be seen in isolation from *other* toys, clothing, even wallpaper. Corgi admit they're up against the idea that toys don't *have* to have educational values whereas books do. In defence they point out that *reading* is involved in *all* their titles and that their award-winning Weetabix promotion (children collected tokens from an on-pack offer and redeemed them for free books) elicited nearly a million redeemed books over a two-year period.

The conclusion they have drawn is that books *must* be a part of the total children's product market, but that it can only do this by having an equally strong commitment to quality book publishing.



Illustrators for Ethiopia

Hard on the heels of the very successful *The Children's Book* appeal comes another initiative from the world of children's books to raise funds for Ethiopia. Over one hundred pieces of original artwork have been donated by internationally known illustrators ranging

alphabetically from Janet Ahlberg to Freire Wright. An exhibition of the illustrations will be travelling the country in the coming months. Visitors (and those who cannot get to see it) are invited to donate £1 and make a guess at the total world sales of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in its 21st

birthday year. The one hundred nearest guessers will win the pictures. The project is sponsored by the Puffin Club, Athena and DRS of Milton Keynes who are handling the entries on their computer. It's a Band Aid approved project.

For details of how to enter,

contact Eunice McMullen, Penguin Ethiopian Appeal, PO Box 27, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1LT. For details of where to see the exhibition, contact Bob Wilson, North Staffs. Polytechnic, Design Dept, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent.