

EDITORIAL

Those of us who attended the IBBY conference in Sydney in May will be approaching Children's Book Week with renewed enthusiasm for the advancement of good children's books. The IBBY conference demonstrated with complete thoroughness how deep "the impulse to story"—to invent, tell or listen—is in all of us, and how stories can transcend any barriers of race and language, particularly when translated well with an ear to the rhythms and customs that go with the second language. Book Week is a time for us enthusiasts of children's literature to rejoice in the wealth we already have, and to try to impart some of our enjoyment to others who are not yet aware of it.

Book Week is also a time for the pragmatic booksellers to rejoice as they can take advantage, at a rather slow time of year, of promotions by all branches of the Children's Book Council. As the May issue of the *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* says, "No-one could afford to pay for this sort of publicity which is generated free by the excellent organizations that foster good reading in every State." Also, booksellers can take advantage of this promotion "with an absolutely clear conscience as its aim is not mere commercialism but the cultural enrichment of our children". Keep up the good work, members of The Children's Book Council!

Eleanor Stodart.

CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA JUDGES' REPORT, 1978

GENERAL STATEMENT

The 65 entries in this year's awards showed an encouraging diversity in theme, style and genre, ranging from science fiction and fantasy to humour and realism set in the city as well as in the ever-present outback. Entries in the Picture Book Award reflected this trend, and a significant number reached a pleasingly high standard. That rare commodity in Australian children's books, humour, was a welcome element in some entries. Although overall there was some improvement in the standard of production, too many books were still flawed by poor proof-reading and other editorial oversights. Despite the considerable increase in the total number of entries, the judges again regretted the scarcity of good material for the seven- to ten-year-old reader.

Class A—BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD
WRIGHTSON, PATRICIA *The Ice is Coming* Hutchinson Australasia
(Literature Board Award of \$1500)

The judges recognized in this fine novel the fulfilment of earlier promise to create a distinctly Australian mythology of complete credibility within which the spirit world and the world of everyday form a convincing unity.

Patricia Wrightson skilfully creates an atmosphere of mounting tension from the relatively slow beginning to the excitement of the climax. Her clarity of insight into character, her control of situations and writing, combine to make this a memorable book.

HIGHLY COMMENDED
SPENCE, ELEANOR *A Candle for Saint Antony* Oxford²
(Literature Board Award of \$500)

In this sensitive portrayal of adolescent friendship of two boys of different cultures Eleanor Spence has succeeded in making a moving statement of personal and social relevance. She delineates with remarkable accuracy the people and values of Australian urban life, contrasting them with those of Europe.

COMMENDED
ROY, THOMAS *The Curse of the Turtle* Bodley Head³
(Literature Board Award of \$250)

This is a novel which brings into sharp focus the tensions and cultural differences between Aboriginal and white Australian. The author succeeds admirably in his depiction of the outback life-style and the attitude of its people.

BENNETT, JACK *The Lieutenant* Angus & Robertson³
(Literature Board Award of \$250)

The Lieutenant recounts with clarity but restraint Bligh's epic open-boat journey. Each character takes on a real identity as the narrative reveals the continual hardships and personal crises encountered.

FURTHER COMMENT

The judges also wish to draw attention to a number of entries which were of interest and value. Mary White's *Dominic* (Methuen)⁴ broke new ground with its unconventional setting and the complex interaction of its unusual characters. *Shadow on the Hills* (Rigby)⁵ was vintage Thiele with an attractive blend of serious theme and country humour. *The Nine Bronze Tripods* by Norma Marilyn (Cassell)⁶ was a beautifully crafted book which presented new perspectives on an ancient and exotic civilization.

Class B—PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR
BROOKS, RON—illustrator of *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Car*⁸
by Jenny Wagner Kestrel
(Visual Arts Board Award of \$1500)

The judges were unanimous in selecting this book for the top award. Illustrations and text match perfectly in a deceptively simple story which will appeal to children and which has a subtly conveyed message. While the theme is universal, there are many touches in the illustrations which are distinctively Australian. Well designed and technically sound in every aspect, this book comes as close to the perfect picture book as Australia has yet produced.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

AR MITCHELL, DAVIIL — *Illustrator of The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*,¹
Text by Ronda Arncliffe
(Visual Arts Board Award of \$500)
Deutsch/Hutchinson Australia

This gay and inventive story has all the ingredients that children enjoy. The colourful illustrations, the unsuccessful and humorous attempts to supply the lighthouse keeper with his gourmet lunch, a very reluctant cat, the unabashed irony of the seagulls, add up to a lot of fun.

COMMENDED

NILAND, DEBORAH — *illustrator of The Sugar-Plum Christmas Books*
by Jean Chapman
(Visual Arts Board Award of \$250)
Hodder & Stoughton

This attractive and useful book fills a gap long felt by librarians and parents at Christmas time. The illustrator has matched her skill and style to suit the subject matter, traditional or festive, as the occasion demands.

The Aboriginal Children's History of Australia
(Visual Arts Board Award of \$250 to Aboriginal Arts Board)

Rigby

In a class of its own, this colourful book is original in conception and is generally successful. There is not always as close a relationship between text and pictures as is desirable, but its freshness and vigour of approach more than compensate. Although unable to give it a major award, the judges regard this as a very significant book and congratulate all those involved in its production.

Reviews:

1. R.T., January 1978
2. page 45, this issue
3. R.T., April 1978
4. pages 46-7, this issue
5. R.T., October 1977
6. pages 36-7, this issue

AUSTRALIAN BOOK DESIGN AWARDS —CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Each year the Australian Book Publishers' Association makes awards for the best-designed Australian books. For the first time this year publishers other than members of the ABPA were allowed to enter.

In the children's books section two awards were made, one to *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat* by Jenny Wagner, designed and illustrated by Ron Brooks (Kestrel), for a careful design throughout and admirably suitable illustrations for the gentle story of a widow and her two pets. The other went to *Trim* by Matthew Flinders, illustrated by Annette Macarthur-Onslow, designed by Annette Macarthur-Onslow and Robin James (Collins Australia). In *Trim* the black and white illustrations harmonize well with the text and the front of the jacket is enhanced by the omission of titles.

JOHN BROWN

A muddled account of the muddled making of what appears to be something of a muddle

by RON BROOKS

Athens, May 15. (Twitch: I'm better on pictures than I am on words.) It is about midnight. I tried to make some notes for this article on the flight from London last night. But it seems so long ago. . . . *John Brown*. Last night even. Acropolos in between.

Take out the scribbled pages, put them in front of me. Stare at them. Propped up against the pillow. Apparently don't get a top sheet just one blanket. But it's a hot night anyway. My favourite lady beside me, ruining that perfect profile with John Fowler's *Ebony Tower*. I've just finished *Daniel Martin*. Fantastic. Absolutely hooked; we've brought all his things with us. Plus other. Am halfway through Hoban's *Turtle Diary* at the moment.

Can't concentrate on this article at all. A wee bit preoccupied. I'm hoping to do quite a bit on a new book while in the islands, and I missed out on the art-supply shops in London. Got some things: inks, water colours, nibs, pencils, etc., but am short on paper. Will have to poke about tomorrow and see what's available here. Bit nervous. Not sure of my chances.

Eleanor Stodart's letter arrived while we were still in Italy. Picked it up two weeks later, wrote straight away saying sure, would love to, and yes, May 19 wouldn't be a problem. Ho, ho. Ten days like hairy goats in London. Fiddle with dummy of new book. Too many letters wanting replies. *Reading Time* somewhere in the middle of the heap. Then, because my lovely mother would kill me if I hadn't, off to Scotland. McCartney's *Mull of Kintyre* and the graves of my ancestors. Half of them anyway; the others were convicts I'm sure. Or so I like to think. I do my little bit. Collected parking fines all through France and Spain and a whole lot in London. Kestrel were a bit rattled by the first couple of summonses, paid them off, which meant I had to pay them back. But they've worked out a routine reply to them now. "Visiting International", returning to his own country too early to attend on the date set. . . . And so on. Accomplishes after the fact.

Scotland. Like visiting childhood dreams again. Massacres. Loch Ness. But, somehow, with one million pounds on her head, we didn't really expect the old dear to show. And I remember bits of a film a long time ago. Was it called *Brigadoon? Bonnidoon?* A musical I think. Idyllic glens, sunlight filtering. Old stone bridges curving over rippling brooks, wildflowers. And I am amazed to find that it really is so. Still. Castles.

England was like that for me also. Dorset. Hedgerows, stone cottages, thatched roofs, fields, lanes, stiles. English country gardens. And all those lovely trees, so nice to draw. Did a book while we lived in a lovely old mill-house in Dorset for four months. Its pictures a little salute and thank-you for the illusions lasting. . . . The story I wrote while still in Australia, and is probably just the reverse, but softly.

Some months later, after wanders around France, Spain, Morocco, Portugal, more pictures for a lovely little novel by Ted Greenwood, set