



The Carnegie and Greenaway Medals

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Jan Mark and **Martin Salisbury** on the shortlisted titles.

The winners of the 2003 Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals, the most prestigious children's book awards in the UK, will be announced in July. But what about the shortlists? **Jan Mark** and **Martin Salisbury** investigate.

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Jan Mark on the Carnegie Medal Shortlist

In its original manifestation the Carnegie medal was awarded for 'The Best Children's Book of the Year'. Selecting the best book of 1936, for which it was first awarded, must have been a fairly straightforward exercise. There were relatively few contenders and those were simpler times. There can have been little debate about what constituted a children's book because there was not much doubt about how one identified a child. Now the citation reads 'For an outstanding book ... for children and young people'. There are thousands of children's books published annually, vast sums are involved, children are a targeted consumer group and we have witnessed the emergence of the 'crossover book', initially a work of fiction which found an adult readership (not the other way about, take note); more recently a book which is published on both adult and children's lists.

Children's books have always had an adult readership, the difference now being that adults read them unblushingly in public, and books for both children and young adults deal with material which once no one would have dreamed of making available to them. That first Carnegie Medal went to Arthur Ransome's **Pigeon Post** which was published only eight years after **The Well of Loneliness** by Radclyffe Hall, of which an overheated journalist infamously wrote, 'I would rather give a healthy boy or girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel'. **The Well of Loneliness** was never intended for boys and girls in the first place, but the prussic acid would have been out for **The Shell House**, Linda Newbery's sympathetic and considered look at the confused sexual orientation of a contemporary teenager set alongside the story of soldier lovers in WWI - incidentally the time-setting of Hall's novel - which *is*, rightly, intended for boys and girls. But the lads in it are not children and would not consider themselves to be children.

Is **Martyn Pig**, Kevin Brooks's debut novel about an accidental parricide and its ramifications, for or about children? It is the Essex setting that gives it its air of gritty realism, the drab vicissitudes of modern low life. In fact it is cheerfully preposterous, part of the fine old British literary tradition of the fun to be had with misappropriated corpses, but the persons of the tale are well into their teens, or older, as are the characters in Alan Gibbons's **The Edge**, a powerful study of domestic brutality and racial hatred. The multiple-viewpoint narration is not quite so successfully deployed here as in his **Caught in the Crossfire**; it can make a few seconds of violence seem interminable and there is a lot more than a few seconds, but it is strongly felt, strongly written, for rather older young people, perhaps.

Up on Cloud Nine by Anne Fine is a rollicking account of a very odd couple, related by Ian at the hospital bedside of his friend Stolly, recovering from a near-fatal mishap that may not have been an accident. Ian has seen the dark heart of the hilarity. It is an engaging read but there is something hasty in the execution that begs the question, in both senses, of whether Stolly's obsession with child mortality arises from his reluctance to become the adult his childhood is making him. Lian Hearn's **Across the Nightingale Floor** is an ambitiously conceived, meticulously researched and elegantly written ripping yarn of ninjas, samurai, murder, massacre and some really impressive scenery. The protagonists, although young, are in a society where they function as adults, as does the young hero of **The Dark Horse** by Marcus Sedgwick. This is a portrait of someone ill-equipped to handle the responsibility thrust upon him. The shamanistic element is unnecessary; this tale delivers a genuinely shocking denouement in purely human terms.

None of these novels is unsuitable for children? no book is unsuitable for the right reader and they are all stimulating reads, but neither is any of them, except perhaps the last, written with *children* in mind. Everyone in them is young, but when we talk about young adults the operative word is adult. We are less certain now about what a child is, and rather too willing to let other people tell us. Which leaves Sharon Creech and **Ruby Holler**. Her twin heroes, Dallas and Florida, are 13 but seem much younger, for very convincing reasons. This is a traditional North American story of orphans taken in by unlikely fosterers, with the inversion that it is the orphans whose hearts have to be won. It is unashamedly charming; funny, optimistic and above all, kind-hearted. The media have worked hard to convince us that we are surrounded by cold-eyed acquisitive calculating cynics. Children are actually far more child-like than we are led to believe. We don't insult them by taking this into account.

The Carnegie Medal shortlist

The Shell House, Linda Newbery, David Fickling Books, 0 385 60389 4, £10.99 hbk

Martyn Pig, Kevin Brooks, The Chicken House, 1 903434 99 8, £5.99 pbk

The Edge, Alan Gibbons, Dolphin, 1 84255 094 2, £4.99 pbk

Up on Cloud Nine, Anne Fine, Doubleday, 0 385 60372 X, £10.99 hbk

Across the Nightingale Floor, Lian Hearn, Pan Macmillan, 1 4050 0032 5, £12.99 hbk

The Dark Horse, Marcus Sedgwick, Dolphin, 1 85881 884 2, £4.99 pbk

Ruby Holler, Sharon Creech, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 5617 2, £10.99 hbk (see also p.18)

Martin Salisbury on the Greenaway Medal shortlist

For the second year running the hugely popular Lauren Child has two titles in the Greenaway shortlist. **Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?** is a clever, anarchic subversion of the traditional text/image relationship and, as with **That Pesky Rat**, is executed through Child's now familiar combination of the hand-drawn line and scanned photographic textures, digitally arranged on the page. Nick Butterworth's **Albert Le Blanc** demonstrates a far more traditional approach, both to design and use of media. His soft, delicate watercolour figures, occasionally highlighted with coloured pencil, are carefully positioned and allowed to breathe in relation to the white space of the page, the characters tending to enter stage left and depart stage right. **The Kiss That Missed** by David Melling also falls into the 'traditional' category, skilled draughtsmanship of the Disneyesque variety, with pleasing contrasts of scale, and overprinting of a fifth colour, gold, to describe the trail of the elusive kiss. Bob Graham's deceptively simple drawings for **Jethro Byrde, Fairy Child** have real charm. His bemused looking characters recall those of the late Mel Calman in their minimalism. Somehow they manage to co-exist successfully on the page with other comparatively detailed and lovingly observed elements such as garden flowers and weeds. Nick Sharratt's **Pants** are aired through his well known bright, flat, digital colour palette, thoroughly exploring the contemporary preoccupation with such garments.

One of the many strengths of Helen Ward's **The Cockerel and the Fox** is the exquisite sense of page design. The artist

shows a mastery of the double-page spread. Every millimetre is considered in relation to the graphic possibilities of the spread as a whole, and to the dynamic of the shapes against the white of the page. The colour is sensitively and skilfully applied, and as a bonus, we are introduced to a range of rare breed varieties from the farmyard. Finally, an equally well produced book is **Man on the Moon** (a day in the life of Bob) by Simon Bartram. These latter two are especially worthy candidates and would be fighting for my vote from this shortlist. Each one displays many of the characteristics defined in the judging criteria.

So what of Anne Marley, the Chair of Judges?, claim that the shortlist displays ?? not only the best of modern illustration, but the incredible variety of style and content on offer?? There is no disputing the excellence of the work of the shortlisted artists, and of course any selection process is guaranteed to bring out the would-be Sven Goran Eriksson in us mere punters. It is hard not to notice though, the glaring omissions of the last few years. Perhaps this points to an inevitable chasm between perspectives on ?art? from librarians, as compared to those of artists, designers and art-educators. The recent heightened awareness of the depth and quality of artists working in the field of children?s picture books, and the growing interest in their methods and processes, has come about largely thanks to the curatorial efforts of Quentin Blake. To some extent this may have further exposed this gulf in perceptions.

2002 saw the publication of a number of highly original British picture books. **Mythological Monsters of Ancient Greece** (Walker) by Sara Fanelli gained an honorable mention at Bologna but did not make the Greenaway list. Fanelli is one of our most innovative illustrators. Yes, she is working on the boundaries of the discipline, but such creativity is vital to the all-round health of the subject. She is an inspiration to art-students everywhere. John Lawrence?s **This Little Chick** (Walker) was at the same time innovative and traditional, more importantly it was exquisitely beautiful and was good enough to win the New York Times Certificate of Excellence. Once again, it was nowhere to be seen in the Greenaway list. Alexis Deacon?s stunning debut, **Slow Loris** (Hutchinson), is similarly noticeable by its absence. Surely his astonishing follow-up, **Beegu**, cannot be ignored next year. And where is Emma Chichester Clark in the awards list? One of the most consistently magical and enchanting artists we have ever had, it seems inconceivable that she can have been overlooked. Speaking of magic, Angela Barrett?s darkly enchanting vision has clearly also escaped the judging panel?s notice. Charlotte Voake, Patrick Benson, Posy Simmonds, Stephen Biesty, the list goes on. Perhaps, with the planned creation of the new Quentin Blake Gallery of Illustration, it is time to look at ways to reward the sort of artistic excellence which may not always win the popularity awards or top the sales lists, but which displays the kind of artistic integrity essential for lasting value.

The Greenaway Medal shortlist

Who?s Afraid of the Big Bad Book? Lauren Child, Hodder, 0 340 80555 2, £5.99 pbk

That Pesky Rat, Lauren Child, Orchard, 1 84121 276 8, £4.99 pbk

Albert Le Blanc, Nick Butterworth, Collins, 0 00 711970 4, £9.99 hbk

The Kiss That Missed, David Melling, Hodder, 0 340 79718 5, £5.99 pbk

Jethro Byrde, Fairy Child, Bob Graham, Walker, 0 7445 8863 4, £10.99 hbk

Pants, Nick Sharratt, text Giles Andreae, David Fickling Books, 0 385 60434 3, £10.99 hbk

The Cockerel and the Fox, Helen Ward, Templar, 1 84011 515 7, £9.99 hbk

Man on the Moon, Simon Bartram, Templar, 1 84011 445 2, £9.99 hbk

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Jan Mark won the Carnegie Medal in 1977. Her latest book is **Something in the Air** published by Doubleday, 0 385

60539 0, £10.99 hbk (see p.25).

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