



Editorial ? March 2010

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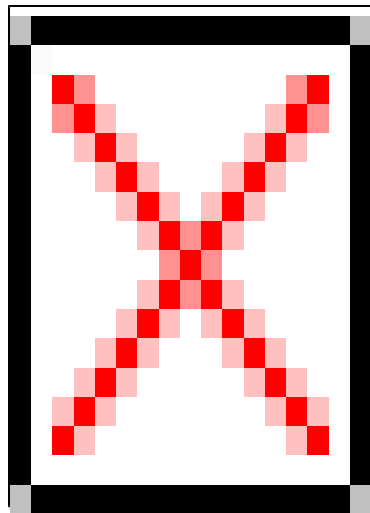
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News and comment from the Editor.



How thoughtless of the authors of now classic books for children (think **Peter Pan**, **The House at Pooh Corner**, **Where the Wild Things Are**) not to have bestirred themselves to write sequels or indeed create a whole series. How could they confine themselves, Salinger-like, to the production of only one (OK, in Milne's case two) star titles?

Such curmudgeonly behaviour risks limiting the commercial opportunities available to today's publishers did they not step in to commission sequels from other hands. However, the problem with these other hands is that, even when they write well and in keeping with the voice and vision of the original book, they are not J M Barrie, A A Milne or indeed Maurice Sendak. The result will inevitably be inauthentic and second best.

The 2006 sequel to **Peter Pan**, Geraldine McCaughrean's **Peter Pan in Scarlet**, was authorized and commissioned by the Special Trustees of Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital (to whom Barrie entrusted the rights in his creation) in order to help generate continuing income for that worthy institution ? which no doubt it does. Whether the Trustees' stipulation that it should ?share the same enchanting characters as the original? was enough to ensure the preservation of Barrie's particularity is another matter.

Now we have David Benedictus's **Return to the Hundred Acre Wood**, a ?sequel? to **The House at Pooh Corner**. As Brian Alderson points out in his review, after **The House at Pooh Corner** ?nothing more needed to be said?.

Dave Eggers's **The Wild Things** is a very different kettle of fish: a novelisation of the film script he co-wrote for **The Wild Things**, a film adaptation ?based on the book by Maurice Sendak? and directed by Spike Jonze. Sendak served as a producer on the film and was ?fully involved? the press release tells us. He is quoted as saying: ?Spike?didn't do an homage to the book; he did something that belongs to him, which makes him a real filmmaker and a real artist? He's turned it into *his* ?Wild Things? without giving up mine??

I don't share Sendak's enthusiasm for this utterly tedious full length feature film (**Where the Wild Things Are** on which it is 'based' is nine sentences long!) and I regret that the Wild Things of the film have been so liberally and literally based on Sendak's illustrations. However, it could be argued that this film, however yawn making, is at least a development of the original book into new media, not a 'pretend' Sendak. This cannot be argued for Eggers' film adaptation book, **The Wild Things**, of which Robert Dunbar writes in this issue: 'there must be few contemporary children's books which seem so utterly pointless.'

Introducing children to art

In this issue's 'Ten of the Best', Martin Salisbury chooses books that set out to introduce children to the visual arts. These are ten excellent and enjoyable titles but Martin also comments that 'the very best picture books, on any subject, are themselves the best introduction a child can have to art and design. A bookshelf that contains the likes of Maurice Sendak, Charles Keeping, Bruno Munari and John Burningham cannot fail to visually educate and inspire.'

Illustrator Brian Wildsmith makes a similar point. Interviewer Joanna Carey reports that 'he is puzzled by what he perceives in the UK to be a gulf between fine art and illustration' 'It's a cultural thing,' he says. 'Illustration is undervalued in the UK.'

Indeed it is. Astonishingly, given the richness and quality of our children's book illustration, unlike Japan or the US we have no gallery dedicated specifically to children's book illustration.

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