

Rising Tide: The Boom in Historical Fiction About India and the Indian Diaspora

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A few years ago, I was hired to conduct a literature search for a major textbook publisher. The editors were revising their middle school and high school literature anthologies and wanted them to reflect and include a more up-to-date and diverse portrayal of Asian America and Asian Americans. The majority of the Asian-American titles in the existing table of contents were by East Asian authors, well-recognized and award-winning names like Amy Tan, Lensey Namioka, and Lawrence Yep. South Asian voices were limited to Jhumpa Lahiri and one or two other names such as Jawaharlal Nehru.

Yes, I thought at the time, *these anthologies are very much in need of an update.*

I spent the next few months scouring novels, poetry collections, short story anthologies, and nonfiction collections in search of works by South Asian authors that could speak to young readers. My search was fruitful in many respects. In recent years there has been a “burst of literature for children and teens for and about South Asia” (Makhijani, 2006). Young readers also have access to *Kabani*, the first South Asian literary magazine for children.

At the end of my research phase, I was able to pass along to my textbook editors high quality pieces that explored contemporary themes such as coming of age, cultural expression, and the immigrant experience, by writers who included Marina Budhos, Mitali Perkins, Uma Krishnaswami, Tanuja Desai Hidier, Anjali Banerjee, and Kashmiri Sheth. Indeed, while South Asians were “all but invisible in the world of North American children’s literature” (Krishnaswami, 2003) during my adolescent years, I was thrilled that I could provide conclusive proof to my editors that things had changed.

I faced a different reality, however, when it came to historical fiction. Even though Linda Sue Park won the Newbery Medal for *A Single Shard* back in 2002, granting a level of legitimacy to the genre and stories taking place outside North America, I found myself sitting in a library in early 2005 barely able to count the number of American-published historical novels about South Asia and the diaspora on my two hands. There were the usual suspects: Gloria Whelan’s *Homeless Bird*, which takes on child marriage and widowhood; Suzanne Fisher Staples’s young adult novels, *Shabanu* and *Haveli*, which explore tribal life and forced marriage in Pakistan, and her novel about Indian temple dancers, *Shiva’s Fire*; and Deborah Ellis’s Breadwinner trilogy located in Afghanistan.

Overall, however, I was struck by the dearth of titles, the similarity of themes, and the absence of South Asian voices. If I were an American child interested in Indian history, sadly, it seemed, I would only have access to books set in a not too specific distant past that highlighted the region’s poverty and discriminatory social traditions (many of which have been outlawed). What about its intersection with colonialism? What

about the nonviolent resistance movement led by Mahatma Gandhi? What about the connection between immigration, migration, and development? All these stories were still invisible.

Not so anymore. The last year has witnessed a boom in middle grade and young adult historical fiction set in India or the Indian diaspora. Between 2007 and 2008, a noticeable wave of titles appeared on bookshelves here in North America: *Keeping Corner*, by Kashmiri Sheth; *Climbing the Stairs*, by Padma Venkatraman; *Child of Dandelions*, by Shenaaz Nanji; *Secret Keeper*, by Mitali Perkins; and *Anila’s Journey*, by Mary Finn.

In this essay I examine the diversity and common themes of these recent titles and evaluate their contribution to the world of children’s literature. I also discuss the challenges of publishing such novels and seek to answer the question as to whether this fertile crop of historical fiction is a passing trend or reflects a shift in publishing agendas and taste.

There are some striking similarities between the five novels that came off the presses between 2007 and 2008. All feature strong female protagonists whose personal situations force them to clash with the thinking of their times. However, the times and political climate that each novel focuses on is quite different.

Colonial Adventure

In Mary Finn’s *Anila’s Journey* (Candlewick, 2008), we meet Anila Tandy, an Anglo-Indian teenager who lives in Calcutta in the late eighteenth century. Her deceased mother was a simple Bengali woman from a fishing village outside the city, and her father, an Irishman and writer for the East India Company, has been missing for several years. Anila is a talented artist whose guardians are an unmarried English tutor, Miss Hickey, and the tutor’s father, a famous painter named Thomas Hickey. In fact, Thomas Hickey is a real person whose painting *An Indian Lady*, which hangs in the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin, inspired this novel. When the Hickeys move south to Madras, Anila stands her ground and refuses to leave Calcutta. She wants to stay in her birth city in case her father returns.

Miss Hickey sees an ad for “an apprentice draughtsman ... to accompany a scholar on an upriver expedition to record avian life in Bengal” and encourages Anila to apply for the position.

All feature strong female protagonists whose personal situations force them to clash with the thinking of their times.

After all, the Hickeys call her “the Bird Girl of Calcutta.”

Finn’s multi-layered novel follows Anila on her journey as she seeks out a job that is clearly not meant for a woman. While this is a story about breaking gender barriers in late eighteenth-century India, it is also a tender coming of age tale where our protagonist bumps up against social mores of her day and examines her identity as both a child of rural India and of the colonial empire. Chapters alternate between Anila’s discoveries and encounters on the river journey and her narration of her parents’ love story and her mother’s demise. Along the way, chance meetings and dangerous currents pull her toward and away from finding her father.

Historical novels can fall into two distinct categories: doglike and catlike (Butts, 2001; Garfield, 1970). The doglike is “when the author deliberately looks back and makes his characters subordinate to his history.” The catlike historical novel is “when the author looks not back but about him and his history is subordinate to his characters.” The new crop of historical novels that focus on South Asia fall into the latter category, and Finn’s novel is no exception. Instead of using Anila’s story as a lens through which to tell a story about British rule in India, Finn paints a picture of the complex layers of life in British India by taking us into the world of a sensitive, gutsy girl who straddles both worlds.

The ebb and flow of Finn’s narrative permits readers to focus first on the story (a rather delicious adventure) and then on the historical period. In Garfield’s words, such a book is “smaller, sleeker, and more self-contained. [It doesn’t] aim to be particularly helpful, but, once picked up, [it grips] rather more and firmly [resists] being put down” (Garfield, 1970).

Gandhian Feminism

The same experience applies to the reading of our next two novels, both of which are set in the context of the end of British colonial rule and Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership of India’s independence movement.

In Kashmira Sheth’s *Keeping Corner* (Hyperion, 2007), precocious 11-year-old Leela lives in 1920s India where caste and tradition are slowly beginning to be questioned along with the strictures of colonialism. Married since age nine, she is widowed just a few days before she moves in with her husband’s family when he is bitten by a snake. Leela is forced to shave her head, discard her colorful glass bangles, and spend the next year “keeping corner” in the seclusion of her home, as was the Brahman tradition for widows in her small village in western India. Her fate seems sealed—she will spend the rest of her life in mourning—until she becomes aware of a new leader among her people, Mahatma Gandhi. As Leela learns to read and tunes in to India’s new political movement of civil disobedience and satyagraha that took hold in the aftermath of World War I, she begins to wonder whether she can use the same path to free herself.

The independence movement takes center stage in Padma Venkatraman’s *Climbing the Stairs* (Putnam, 2008). Set in 1941, during World War II and the peak of anti-colonial activity, it follows 15-year-old Vidya’s struggle to obtain an education

amidst turmoil in her life. Vidya’s father is a Gandhian freedom fighter who participates in nonviolent peace marches. One day, he is severely beaten during a protest, so much so that he is no longer able to speak. Vidya, her brother, and her parents are transplanted from the relatively modern metropolis of Bombay to the more conservative Southern city of Madras where they must live with a traditional extended family. Vidya seeks solace in her grandfather’s off-limits library, where she harbors the hope of going to college, as her father once promised her. Meanwhile, her brother seeks solace in the path of war, by joining the Indian army to fight alongside the British in World War II. An important subplot here, then, is the protagonist’s intellectual struggle to reconcile the paths of violence and nonviolence, both of which were taking hold

in India. Readers can appreciate the questions of whether a nation should go to war for its ideals or fight in a different way; these are matters that are not so alien in today’s world where the war in Iraq and the “war on terror” take center stage.

In both these novels, education is the golden key of opportunity for the young protagonists. The dreams of both Leela and Vidya are supported by strong males who advocate on their behalf—in the case of Leela, her elder brother, and in Vidya’s case, her grandfather as well as her love interest, a distant relative of her extended family named Raman. The thinking of these men is clearly influenced by Gandhian thought and the social change it inspired.

Historical fiction of the last two decades has been criticized for its liberties with the historical facts and revisionism in interpretation (MacLeod, 1998). In her essay “Writing Backward: Modern Models in Historical Fiction” in *Horn Book*, Anne MacLeod examines award-winning historical fiction such as Patricia MacLachlan’s *Sarah Plain and Tall* and Avi’s *The Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* and finds that its authors “evade the common realities of the societies they write about”:

In the case of novels about girls or women, authors want to give their heroines freer choices than their cultures would in fact have offered. To do that, they set aside the social mores of the past as though they were minor afflictions, small obstacles, easy—and painless—for an independent mind to overcome.

Although they do grant their protagonists choices and a greater measure of freedom than would have been expected for their times, the authors of *Climbing the Stairs* and *Keeping*

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Corner capture the immense social and political change that was occurring in India at a crucial moment in world history. In mid twentieth-century India, Mahatma Gandhi not only motivated the masses to take up the cause for independence from 100 years of British rule but also took the lead in advocating for *sarvodaya*, or complete progress or reform of society. This included social equality and education for women.

“Education is a human right, and if you educate a woman, you educate a family,” Gandhi said. Because of his influence, thousands of women, widows and housewives, students and elderly, rural and urban, participated in India’s freedom movement and began taking small steps toward independence in their personal lives. The Indian constitution, adopted in 1950, emphasized the equality of men and women and outlawed child marriage, as well as the isolation of widows and the practice of *sati*, bride burning (Kamat, 1998).

The stories of Leela and Vidya are illustrative microcosms of the wave of change washing over the country during the first half of the twentieth century. Both characters were inspired by real women in the authors’ lives—in Sheth’s case, her great aunt who was a child widow and, in Venkatraman’s case, her mother, who grew up in India in the 1940s and whose intellectual growth was nurtured by her grandfather.

Migration Journeys

Migration caused by political upheavals, economic crises, and totalitarianism have marked the latter half of the twentieth century. The authors of *Child of Dandelions* and *Secret Keeper* write their novels for young readers in the context of these upheavals, and shine a spotlight on them through the experience of young women in modern environments.

Shenaaz Nanji’s *Child of Dandelions* sheds light on the upheaval and ethnic cleansing of Asian Indians in Uganda during the early 1970s. Our protagonist is 15-year-old Sabine, a girl whose comfortable life is torn asunder on August 6, 1972, the day that dictator Idi Amin issues his expulsion order for all Indians in Uganda. Sabine turns to her parents for protection as the 90-day countdown begins. Sabine’s father, a wealthy businessman and landowner, is determined to stay and Sabine agrees with him. Her family is not like the other Indians. Her best friend Zena is African. They’ve grown up together like “twin beans of one coffee flower,” and Zena is just like her sister, even if others don’t see it that way.

As the countdown continues, however, the growing chants of “*Muhindi, nenda nyumbani!* Indian, go home!” drown out Sabine’s optimism. Amid reports of violent attacks against Indian families, the mysterious disappearance of her favorite uncle, and strained relations between her and Zena (whose uncle is a general and crony of Idi Amin), Sabine’s bubble bursts, and she is forced to reexamine her understandings of race and class. She slowly starts to see discrepancies in how Indians treat the Black Ugandans.

In Sabine, author Nanji—who grew up in Mombasa, Kenya, and often visited her family in Uganda throughout her childhood—sensitively creates a gutsy and emotional character, a young woman who thinks and acts quickly to protect her family

and loved ones. Though the scenario in which Sabine hires two private detectives to solve the case of her missing uncle seems far-fetched—would a young girl in 1972 Uganda really be able to work with two James Bond types?—it does add humor to the narrative and is easily forgiven in light of the novel’s nuanced examination of the complex dynamics of race and class as they manifested themselves in 1970s Uganda.

Books like *Child of Dandelions* are a welcome addition to both the field of South Asian literature and children’s literature because they “create history that history has not been sufficiently generous to supply of its own accord. . . . This is a genre based on an unacknowledged irony: it intends to sharpen the sense of historical realism by producing imaginary history” (Stevenson, 2003).

To date, there are very few fictional works that examine the personal, social, and political turmoil that Amin’s orders caused within the Indian community. There are 150,000 Ugandans of South Asian descent living in North America today, and their history deserves a telling. *Child of Dandelions* stands out for its upfront, honest look at racism as it exists within minority groups. Though the main characters happen to be Muslim, the focus of the novel is not on explaining their culture or religion, but on examining notions of nationhood and patriotism.

Mitali Perkins’s *Secret Keeper* is perhaps the most “catlike” of the new crop of historical fiction. Set in early 1970s India, when the first wave of professional immigration to the United States was occurring, the novel follows Asha, a sensitive young woman whose Baba (father) leaves India in search of economic opportunity abroad. Like Vidya in *Climbing the Stairs*, Asha, her elder sister, and her mother relocate within India to a more conservative household, in this case from New Delhi to Calcutta, where they move in with their extended family—her father’s brother, his wife and children, and her paternal grandmother.

In the midst of family tension and worries about her Baba’s new life, Asha turns to her diary and the rooftop terrace of her uncle’s home for peace and quiet. It is there that she encounters a young neighbor, Jay Sen, with whom she begins a secret friendship.

The backdrop of *Secret Keeper* is the fascinating political period when India’s first female prime minister, Indira Gandhi, waged a war to “abolish poverty.” Perkins makes little mention of current events, but her protagonist draws comparisons between India’s seeming feminist political awakening and the women’s liberation movement in America and expresses frustration with the double standards that she and her sister repeatedly confront in their new, conservative home environment.

When news of Baba’s death arrives, Asha must make a difficult choice of whether to sacrifice her friendship and love with

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Jay for her sister's happiness. Throughout this novel, we watch as modernity and convention, duty to family, and personal desire collide. Perkins uses her characters to create a picture of the struggles and challenges that confront young Indians in the face of globalization and immigration. In fact, what is so refreshing about this novel is that on some level, it could be a coming of age novel set in the United States as it depicts culture clashes and gaps that exist between various generations of all kinds of immigrants.

A Passing Trend, or Here to Stay?

These five novels are a powerful tool for integrating and highlighting voices from the past—especially those of children, minorities, women, and the poor—that may not be those generally heard or read by students in their historical studies (Turk, Klein, Dickstein, 2007)

Each of these novels would make for fascinating inclusions in curricula that focus on colonialism, social reform, and Gandhi; theme-based instruction, such as women's rights, freedom, or coming of age (Turk, Klein, Dickstein, 2007); or identity-driven instruction that focuses "on a person or group of people and choose a piece of literature that helps illuminate that identity" (Turk, Klein, Dickstein, 2007).

And yet, the path to publication is certainly not strewn with rose petals. Authors of historical fiction set in modern South Asia, not Mughal times, or that tackles relatively recent events such as genocide or race relations bump up against resistance from agents and editors for doing the very thing that critics praise them for.

Padma Venkatraman tells of several agents who read and raved about the manuscript of *Climbing the Stairs*, but rejected it because they wanted a contemporary novel about India, or one that tackled the culture clash between India and America.

Finally, one agent did see the sparkle in Venkatraman's story and passed it on to editor John Rudolph at Penguin Putnam. Rudolph had been looking to do something on India for some time before the manuscript landed in his lap. "While India and Indian writers are regularly featured in mainstream adult fiction, until recently there's been scant attention to India in kids books," he said in our interview. "When Padma's agent first told me about *Climbing the Stairs*, I was thrilled about the subject matter. However, my initial enthusiasm turned to absolute joy when I actually started reading it and realized it was possibly the best manuscript I'd ever been sent."

Rudolph's sentiments prove that the quality of writing and storytelling override concerns about the salability of ethnic content and distant historical periods. But recent events in mainstream adult publishing and the larger cultural world have also influenced publisher's choices.

In the case of Nanji's novel, publishers at first repeatedly rejected the story as "distant and foreign and not relevant to the North American" and "not economically viable." The author took it upon herself to emphasize protagonist Sabine's emotional experience. At the same time, the commercial success and Oscar recognition of the film *The Last King of Scotland* opened a window for the manuscript to be noticed again and granted

it a new lease on relevance. It was accepted for publication in 2006, the same year that *Scotland* was re-released.

The popularity and literary success of Jhumpa Lahiri, whose books examine Indian social structure, family life, and the immigrant experience, have allowed for the establishment of a niche in the publishing market for stories set in India and the subcontinent. In the instance of Perkins's *Secret Keeper*, her editor, Francoise Bui at Random House, encouraged her to set the entire story in India (the first draft was set half in India, half in America). "I didn't feel the American portion worked, so I suggested the entire story remain in India. It was the way to stay true to the characters—and to probe the fascinating extended family dynamic," Bui said in an interview. "I don't view a foreign setting as a hindrance. As long as the characters are compelling and their stories elicit universal emotions, any reader with a glimmer of curiosity about the world will embrace a novel like *Secret Keeper*."

Sheth, whose *Keeping Corner* has won several awards, including the 2007 Parent's Choice Gold Award, is heartened by this shift in attitude. "As we grow ever more into a multicultural society, an increasing number of readers are interested in stories that reflect our nation's cultural diversity," she observes. "I believe, therefore, that it is natural that readers are curious about and interested in stories set in other countries or set in the US with minority characters."

Moving Beyond Stereotypes

Anthologist and book reviewer Hazel Rochman has pointed out that "stories about foreign places risk two extremes: either they can overwhelm the reader with reverential details of idiom, background, and custom; or they can homogenize the culture and turn all the characters into kids hanging out at the mall" (Rochman, 1995).

These five novels work precisely because they don't fall into either of these categories. They feature strong characters who are coming of age in fascinating times, and they bump up against war, terror, power struggles, and race relations—all situations with which today's readers are familiar.

While one does not have to be of South Asian descent to write authentic historical fiction set in the region or dealing with its people, "one of the great things about writing from your own culture is that you don't feel pressured to be reverential," says Rochman. "You can write about ugliness and failure as well as strength, with characters who are not saints and role models. Readers want complexity and conflict, rooted in particulars; and the best writers, wherever they are from, tell universal stories through personal lives without letting the cultural

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detail down the story.” Of the novels discussed in this article, there is only one that is *not* by an author of South Asian descent: Mary Finn, who hails from Ireland. Finn’s narrative and perspective developed in *Anila’s Journey* represents a departure from previously published works by non-South Asian authors. Unlike the earlier authors of historical fiction, Finn does not seek to portray a foreign world to outsiders as her main goal. Rather, *Anila’s Journey* attains what Rochman describes above as “complexity and conflict, rooted in particulars.”

In the words of children’s author and critic Uma Krishnaswami, Finn’s novel is a step toward a shift in storytelling by non-indigenous and indigenous authors from the “cultural observer” point of view to one which views “history as a constant journey of cultures overlapping, intertwining, sometimes tragically colliding, but also absorbing from each other.”

Is Finn an anomaly or a sign of a shift in the approach to multicultural writing due to globalization? This remains to be seen and is sure to be a question on the radar of those interested in the growing presence of South Asian authors and titles on the middle grade and young adult publishing landscape. Another area that is deserving of further examination and tracking in this sphere is the absence of male protagonists and of stories set in other places of the South Asian diaspora, such as the Caribbean, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and other parts of Africa that have long boasted significant South Asian communities.


One of the most heartening aspects of the recent publishing spate is the fact that it brings to attention the talent of a number of new authors of South Asian descent. These new voices are telling their stories from what Krishnaswami observes as “the perspective of ‘cultural descendent’ rather than ‘cultural observer.’” These authors are shining a spotlight on a range of historical events and periods that have been crucial to shaping South Asia and have had a lasting impact on its diaspora, particularly in North America. They demonstrate a heretofore absent “nuance in historical narrative,” which Krishnaswami and other writers of South Asian descent are happy to welcome onto the literary scene. A significant gap in the landscape has been filled.

“Writers of these books are making links that were never made before,” says Krishnaswami. Rather than focusing on a social problem and making that the thrust of the story, they are telling a story about a particular time period and offering readers a window into the challenges and opportunities that young people might have faced at the time. Indeed, such complex narra-

tives and subplots that avoid drawing contrasts between right and wrong are the stuff that give these historical novels enduring value and offer promising signs that the boom in literature for young people set in South Asia is here to stay.

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Perkins uses her characters to create a picture of the struggles and challenges that confront young Indians in the face of globalization and immigration.

Today's Black Ships: The Cultural and Economic Impacts of the Japanese Hip-Hop Movement

Masanori Isaka

For nearly two centuries the Japanese have adopted many ideas from the United States and improved them at home. Concepts from the U.S. business and entertainment world have become massive cultural and economic movements in Japan. Yet the Japanese take ideas and change them into their own unique style. In short, ideas are “Japanized.” Many years ago, a Japanese commentator used the phrase, “permanent and change,” meaning that ideas that originate in other countries stay in Japan permanently, even if those ideas disappear in the original place. The Japanese also modify and in turn export ideas, as evidenced in their adoption of and current leadership in the automobile and electronics

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industries and in cartooning. All three of these industries began in the United States and have expanded throughout the globe, but they have found their most successful development in Japan.

Though less well known than the above industries, the hip-hop movement is one of the most popular “Japanized” American imports in the country. In its modified version, hip-hop—originating in the United States—has not only dominated Japanese culture but also serves as a microcosm of Japanese business practices.

Target Audience

Many Japanese people enjoy listening to American hip-hop. Some young people visit the United States to experience the “real” hip-hop culture. Despite its popularity, this cultural movement has barely been studied in Japan.

One reason is that older adults are unfamiliar with hip-hop

culture and focus on its negative aspects, like oversized, sloppy clothes and violent lyrics. Another reason is the paucity, until recently, of scholarship in Japan related to hip-hop in the United States or its permutations in the Japanese context. Japanese music market researchers Yuichi Kishimoto and Toshio Azami (2001) write that, “the biggest obstacle, when analyzing popular music, is that only a few information or ‘written materials’ is available to the public” (3). Other, more established areas of cultural studies receive funding from public organizations and publish information, but such support has not flowed to researchers studying hip-hop (Kishimoto and Azami, 2001).

Despite this lack of information in print, hip-hop has come to dominate the music industry in Japan, and to maintain a significant presence in Japanese culture. Its arrival in Japan, its Japanization, and its “underground” rise to popularity provide a useful model for understanding Japanese cultural and business patterns.

Japanese Hip-Hop Revolution and Samurai Spirits: Thumpin’ Camp (1996) and Buddha Brand

Hip-hop has existed in Japan for a long time, at least from the late 1980s. At first, sales were slow and audiences small. However, in the mid-1990s, the “Japanese hip hop revolution” took off and created today’s massive cultural phenomenon. The symbol of the revolution was Thumpin’ Camp, the gathering of more than 30 artists and groups in 1996.

The participating artists described themselves as “Thumpin’,” which is a lower class of samurai and historically considered a term of disdain. The artists referred to themselves this way because in spite of their skills, they lacked exposure and therefore occupied the bottom rungs of the Japanese music scene. One theme of Thumpin’ Camp was the overthrow of old Japanese rap music, which was oriented to imported pop melodies that appealed to mainstream audiences. At the beginning of this event, its organizer, Japanese rap musician ECD, proclaimed, “I killed J-Rap.”

Thumpin’ Camp attracted more than 3,000 people. Toshifumi Jinno, the author of *Hip Hop Japan*, explains its impact, writing that, “the music industry in Japan never believed that Japanese hip hop could be business ... mega sales in this genre were impossible due to its small market; however, Thumpin’ Camp completely reversed their minds while showing how huge its potential market was” (58–59). Thumpin’ Camp closed with a performance by Buddha Brand, which had brought American-style hip-hop to Japan the previous year.

The four members of Buddha Brand went to New York City in the late 1980s to learn about American hip-hop. Dev Large, Nipps, CQ, and DJ Master Key found work as DJs in New York

clubs, where they met and organized today's Buddha Brand. Performing in Brooklyn clubs such as Gorilla's Den and Soul Powers in the early 1990s, they began to write lyrics as rap singers. Still in New York in 1994, they recorded and distributed demo CDs to prominent figures in the Japanese music and fashion industries. Encouraged by the positive response they received, they decided to return to Japan in 1995. A Japanese hip-hop writer, Hiroshi Egaitu (1997), describes the moment they arrived: "There were not only fans cheering, but also an enormous amount of Japanese media and musicians' tributes to Buddha Brand's return to Japan" (17). Back in Japan and in possession of Buddha Brand's demos, ECD emphasizes the high expectations that greeted the foursome's arrival. He writes, "The most unforgettable event in 1992 was when I listened to Buddha Brand's demos for the first time ... [and] I played every single hip hop artist I met" (ECD, 2007, 135–136). When Buddha Brand returned to Japan, ECD got them together with one of the major Japanese music companies, Cutting Edge; the band released "Ningen Hatsudensho" ("Human Generator") in May 1996, selling more than 100,000 copies (Buddha Brand Profile, 2000).

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TERM OF DISDAIN.

After 'Thumpin' Camp, Buddha Brand promoted themselves as the pioneers who opened the "port" of the Japanese hip-hop industry. They compared their return to Japan to Commodore Matthew Perry's arrival into Tokyo Bay in 1854. Perry's "black ships," which forced open the Japanese ports, triggered the end of the Shogunate system and the beginning of Japan's industrialization. After Thumpin' Camp, Buddha Brand released a CD entitled "Kurofune" ("Black Ship"). Appearing in December 1996, the CD depicted Buddha Brand as the "black ship" of Japanese hip-hop (Buddha Brand Profile, 2000).

Since 1997, the members of Buddha Brand have expanded their activities significantly. In August 1997, Dev Large established his record company, Eldorado Records. Since then, he has contracted many local artists to release their recordings nationally. Each member of Buddha Brand worked as a DJ in clubs in Tokyo to play New York hip-hop and to generate interest in the genre. In November 1997, the members appeared on a TV commercial for Toyota, with a tie-in CD, "Tenmei Ware ni Ari (Utsu Youi)" ("The Heaven's Hazard Is Mine [Ready for Shooting]") (Buddha Brand Profile, 2000). Appearing on a nationally broadcast commercial for Toyota showcased their skills to people who had not seen or listened to them before. At that time, commercials with tie-in song releases were an important tool for the music industry

in Japan, and bands sought alliances with major corporations.

From 1998 to the present, Buddha Brand's recordings and live appearances have decreased because the members have taken on the role of promoting the hip-hop scene more deeply and widely in their home country. The group's various members have produced other groups, appeared as featured singers on other artists' recordings, DJed in clubs, and released CDs as solo performers. Dev Large observes that, "there are many youths who are trying to become professional rap musicians, but since the market is so small, many of these young people need to find another job to earn money, like being a waiter in a restaurant. That critically deprives these youths of their 'seasonal' period" (Egaitu, 19). Dev Large adds, "Before they lose such an opportunity, we want to do something for them" (Egaitu, 19). Even though their appearance in public has decreased, their influence on other artists, Japanese listeners, and these young aspiring musicians is extremely strong.

Hip-Hop Spawns New Businesses

Because of Buddha Brand's enormous contribution and other artists' aggressive activities, Japanese hip-hop has become not only an enduring genre of the Japanese music scene but also a successful cultural and economic commodity. Sharon Moshavi, a Boston Globe correspondent, observes:

[Japan] has become a hip-hop nation, with thousands of youths co-opting the music, dress, and style of urban black America. The heavy beats, strong language, and grinding dance of hip-hop (as well as rap and R&B) add up to more than just another of Japan's 30-second fads. Imported from the United States in the early '90s, hip-hop has not only displayed strong power, it's evolving into something more uniquely Japanese. (Moshavi, 2000, A18)

Analyzing hip-hop dance in 2005, Jennifer Weber writes, "there are more than 40 dance schools in Tokyo that specialize in hip hop" (121). Today, over three years later, more than 100 dance schools specializing in hip-hop can be found. Weber notes that dance teachers in bigger studios in Tokyo employ choreographers from Los Angeles who give master classes. According to her, "[d]ance classes in Tokyo are expensive, averaging around [\$22], with master classes costing around [\$32–\$36]" (121). This is not only in Tokyo, but also in local regions. Local dance schools in other areas charge the equivalent of \$20–\$30 in U.S. dollars for a lesson. In spite of these high lesson fees, Japanese students keep coming. Weber explains how these schools attract students:

[u]nlike in NYC or L.A., dance crews are advertised on club flyers as the stars of the night, often above the DJ's name, and are a key draw for clubgoers eager to see hip-hop dance performed at a high level. Since the subway system stops running by 1 am and cabs in Tokyo are pricey, clubs rock until the morning. Marathon dance nights provide fertile ground for the development of new moves and new styles (121).

Her comment illustrates how these Japanese hip-hop dance

schools and clubs have “Japanized” American hip-hop style. Another “Japanized” aspect is that not only clubgoers but also ordinary people learn hip-hop dance. According to Moshavi, “hip-hop dance classes have sprung up at thousands of gyms, as teenagers and housewives try to gyrate like people on MTV” (2000, A18).

Hip-hop fashion has also benefited. Yo Takatsuki, a writer for BBC Tokyo, states “[t]here are more than 300 shops selling hip-hop clothes in central Tokyo alone.” These shops sell big and baggy imported clothes from the United States. Quoting a 22-year-old student living in Tokyo, Takatsuki (2003) writes, “[e]veryone in Tokyo seems to be into hip-hop now. But it’s not just the music. I think many people love the fashion side of it.”

Listeners’ Perspectives: Why Hip-Hop Culture?

Moshavi (2000) traces Japanese interest in hip-hop to the economic collapse of the early 1990s. Many Japanese youth have embraced hip-hop’s expression of anger and frustration, but the genre’s energy also gives them a boost: “[T]hat Japan’s uncertain economy has nurtured the rise of hip-hop is probably no coincidence. This generation of Japanese are more disenfranchised, realizing that simply following the rules like studying hard and

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going to a good college no longer guarantees a good job” (A18). Moshavi explains that “[e]ven if [Japanese listeners] can’t understand the words of American rappers and hip-hop artists, Japanese youth get the mood” (A18). In other words, these youths listen to American hip-hop without understanding the meaning of its lyrics.

ECD sees this phenomenon in cultural (or in his words “racial”) terms, explaining that “Japanese are the race that can enjoy listening to rap music without understanding lyrics ... an interesting fact is that many Japanese would not enjoy movies of Eddie Murphy or Lenny Bruce without subtitles, but rap is different;

people enjoy listening not to understand lyrics” (Jinno, 2003, 38). Attributing this preference to “race” may seem a bit exaggerated, since many other people worldwide listen to music in other languages. However, the Japanese music market is the second largest in the world after the United States (“Universal Music ‘the World Giant’ Offensive Action to Japan,” 2007). Given the relatively smaller population of Japan and size of its music industry, one can assume that many more foreign songs are entering Japan than entering other nations.

Hip-hop commentator Mark Schwartz (1999) explains this movement: “[L]acking ghettos, culture wars, and acknowledged racial disharmony, Japanese youth relate hip hop as the soundtrack to international fashion. Blackness is a commodity on the streets of Tokyo” (p. 365). He points out that Japan is a homogeneous nation with a 98.5 percent native Japanese population. Such homogeneity means that Japan lacks the kind of major cultural and racial conflict that both inspired hip-hop in the United States and made it especially controversial.

As a result, hip-hop became mainstream in Japan, where it took on its own flavor in a very different social and cultural context. According to Moshavi (2000), “[U]ntil, a couple of years ago, virtually all the music came from the United States. But in recent years, hip-hop has started to be dominated by Japanese groups, singing about more Japanese life experiences, and more importantly, singing in Japanese” (18). Takatsuki, the BBC writer in Tokyo, found that American hip-hop lyrics about guns and violence proved too much for Japanese listeners. As Japanese hip-hop matured, artists both modified their lyrics and used their performances to showcase Japanese fashion. Takatsuki observes that some groups, such as Rhymester, dress up like samurai warriors or wear traditional Japanese clothes onstage. Rhymester’s 2007 CD, “Respect,” features the group in samurai costume (Rhymester, 2007).

Japanese Artists Look to the United States

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a new wave of hip-hop artists learned their skills in the United States and then released their first recordings in Japan. Bennie K is the best-known example. The group consists of two girls, Yuki and Cico. Singer Yuki received voice training in the United States as soon as she graduated from junior high school. Rapper Cico experienced U.S. hip-hop culture after finishing her high school education. They met in Los Angeles and in 2001 returned to Japan for Bennie K’s debut. In 2003, Bennie K’s song “Dream Land,” tied in with Coca-Cola, ranked second on the Japanese national hit charts, selling more than 500,000 copies. In 2005, their fourth album, “Japana-Rhythm,” ranked number one. In the same year, more than 100 schools in Japan invited Bennie K as guests at their annual school festivals (Profile). Like Bennie K, many Japanese youths are learning music, dance, and other aspects of American hip-hop by traveling to the United States.

This trend of Japanese artists learning in the United States can be paralleled to other industries. Japanese specialist Frederik L. Schodt (1994) states that “[f]ar more information flows into Japan than out of it” (126). He continues, “[I]n 1991, the United States sent only 980 full-time students to Japan, compared to 48,000 Japanese who attended U.S. universities and colleges on student

visas and 42,000 who took part in special-education programs of less than three months” (126). In a variety of areas, the Japanese have learned important skills in the United States and successfully applied them upon returning home.

Again, it is important to remember Buddha Brand’s expression of this phenomenon—the group described itself as the “black ship,” opening the “port” of the Japanese music scene. By 1872, after Commodore Perry’s arrival in Japan, the Japanese government “encouraged Japanese to study abroad and brought foreigners into Japan ... to help modernize the nation” (Blackford, 1998, 42). Many parents and educational organizations continue to encourage their children to study in the United States.

Tie-in Songs: The Role of Corporate Sponsorship

Buddha Brand became well known beyond the hip-hop scene through the tie-in CD with Toyota recorded in the late 1990s. Bennie K launched its career through a song sponsored by Coca-Cola. These two cases show the pivotal role corporate sponsorship plays in Japan’s music industry. Kishimoto and Tanaka (1998) emphasize that this business style effectively ensures an artist’s success in Japan, regardless of his or her genre or national origin (3). They use the example of British rock musician Rod Stewart in the mid 1990s, when tie-ins between advertisers and recording artists accelerated. According to Kishimoto and Tanaka, Stewart first recorded his song for a Japanese automaker’s TV commercial in 1995, and his sales in Japan increased three times over within a year (10). Kishimoto and Tanaka quote then-department director of imported Western music for Sony Entertainment, Yamamoto Masami: “With a global perspective, it is now necessary to begin promoting an original business style that is best suitable for the Japanese market environment” (Kishimoto and Tanaka, 10). Stewart’s case illustrates how Japan formed its unique marketing system in the music industry around that time (Kishimoto and Tanaka, 10).

Interestingly, this business model also originated in the United States and was “Japanized.” Kishimoto and Tanaka describe it as a modified version of “sponsorship.” They define the Japanese style of corporate sponsorship as collaboration—songs created for movies and television dramas, and songs created for corporate advertising (p. 3). The first type can be seen in many places around the world today as soundtracks and inserted songs for television shows and movies. The second type is relatively new, having appeared in the past decade in Japan (3). Kishimoto and Tanaka ask, “Why have the large number of artists, music productions, clients, and TV producers in Japan actively engaged in undertaking this tied-in approach?” (47). To answer this question, they interview a music industry executive, who responds that, “This is a give-and-take strategy, meaning that clients, for example, can get larger attention of audience with songs of popular artists on their TV commercials while cutting extra costs and time to create their commercial themes, and artists can effectively advertise their songs through their sponsors’ media without an excess promotion, like appearing on music TV programs and putting on a live show” (47). In other words, this strategy represents a “win-win” approach involving artists and sponsors, as each benefits from the other.

Tie-ins began in the late 1980s and have accelerated since then,

during a time of economic contraction in general. Kishimoto and Azami (2001) analyze the number of tied-in songs on the Japanese top 20 charts from 1988 to 2000. The number of sponsored songs ranking in the top 20 is as follows: 10 in 1988, 14 in 1989, 17 in 1990, 20 in 1991, 18 in 1992, 20 in 1993, 20 in 1994, 19 in 1995, 18 in 1996, 17 in 1997, 19 in 1998, 17 in 1999, 11 in 2000 (44). More than half the songs appearing on the top 20 charts have corporate sponsors of some kind. This number indicates a strong relationship between big hits and corporate sponsorships, which have become a significant “tool” in the music industry. The sponsors range from automakers (Toyota), electronics giants (Panasonic), and food and beverage manufacturers (Coca Cola) to movie industry and TV drama productions. Kishimoto and Tanaka (1998) quote the American commentator Cindy Laufenberg, who says, “Music has become a fundamental and signifi-

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cant partner with the advertising industry ... Who could ignore advertising songs for McDonald’s and Pepsi?” (9), but in Japan, “Commercial time on TV is no longer ‘bathroom break’” (52). Indeed, recent TV and radio commercials as well as other advertisements are created with various artists for the purpose of driving CD sales while having high audience rates. The Japanese hip-hop industry proved especially skilled at this strategy to disseminate its artists across the nation while corporations paid special attention to new, popular hip-hop performers, such as Buddha Brand and Bennie K to promote their products. Although hip-hop originated in the spirit of rebellion and in the context of racial conflict in the United States, Japanese artists embraced the style and energy of American hip-hop while toning down the rebellion. In ethnically homogeneous Japan, the genre was easily co-opted for commercial purposes, using the already existing structure of tie-ins for the mutual benefit of artists and corporations. Today, this movement has seamlessly continued in the Japanese music industry, and many new hip-hop artists have been appearing on the national hit charts and on various media with corporate sponsorship.

The Future of the Japanese Hip-Hop Movement

If this movement really fits into the Japanese business “pattern,” which takes ideas from the United States and adapts them for a national and global audience, another question arises: whether or not “Japanized” hip-hop will spread around the world, like automobiles, electronics, and graphic novels. Even though this has not happened yet, some hip-hop artists have been performing

around the world. One of them is Murakami Takashi, a prolific and versatile Japanese artist. Born in 1963, Murakami is engaged not only in hip-hop but also in diverse artistic media, such as cartoon paintings, performance art, and fashion. He is recognized internationally as one of Japan's most prominent artists. One of his international works is his collaboration with Louis Vuitton to create handbags and other products for its fashion house (I Express Hopelessness). Murakami has also held solo shows around the world, including at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York City (2003), Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris (2002), Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo (2001), Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (2001), and Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin in Paris (2001) ("I Express Hopelessness," 2004). In addition, he has been recognized as one of Time's 100 Most Influential People in 2008 (Jacobs, 2008).

Through these activities, Murakami has merged hip-hop with visual arts in innovative ways that have the potential to make him an international superstar. In fact, Murakami currently collaborates with one of the most popular hip-hop singers in the United States, Kanye West. Murakami created the cover of West's third recording, "Graduation," in 2007 (Boucher, 2007). Geoff Boucher describes Murakami's art: "The front cover of 'Graduation' shows a [Pokemon]-like figure being launched into space, an appropriate image given that West's album rocketed to the top of the national sales chart last week, easily grabbing the No. 1 slot with the highest first-week sales of the year, just shy of 1 million copies." According to Geoff Mayfield, Billboard's director of charts and senior analyst, "[Graduation] easily leads the star-studded class of Sept. 11 releases, posting Billboard 200's largest sales total in more than two years" (Mayfield, 2007). Given the success of Murakami's work, it is likely that other Japanese artists will appear on the world hip-hop scene in the very near future, combining musical performance with the visual arts and, once again, creating a uniquely Japanese export.

Conclusion

Having become a significant national, cultural, and business presence since the mid-1990s, Japanese hip-hop appears to be here to stay. Its success is due to the same ideology and business model that led to the success of other Japanese industries, such as automobile manufacturing. The pioneers of Japanese hip-hop learned their skills in the United States and adapted them to the Japanese context—for instance, toning down the aggressive lyrics, creating a network of dance schools that appeal to a broader sector of the population, seeking corporate tie-ins, and merging hip-hop style with fashion and the visual arts. As a result, the imported hip-hop has become a "Japanized" product. Using "Japanized" marketing techniques, the Japanese hip-hop scene has begun its spread around the world. The next songs and graphics you will see on the streets of Los Angeles or New York may be the ones associated with Japanese hip-hop.

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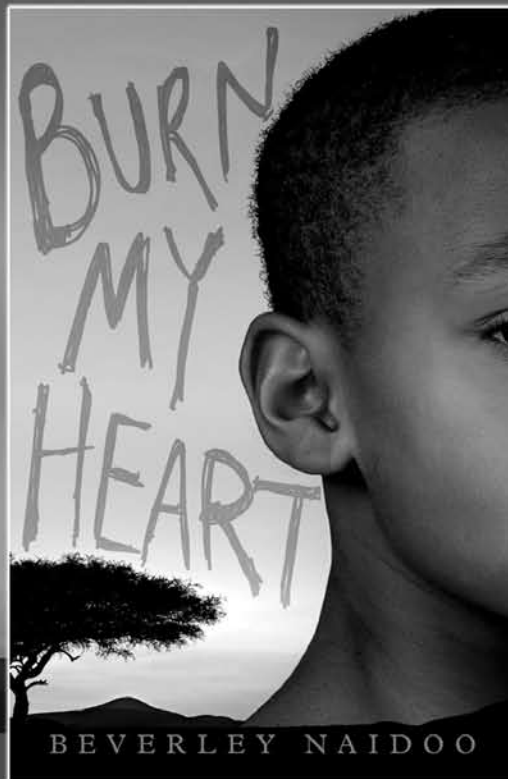
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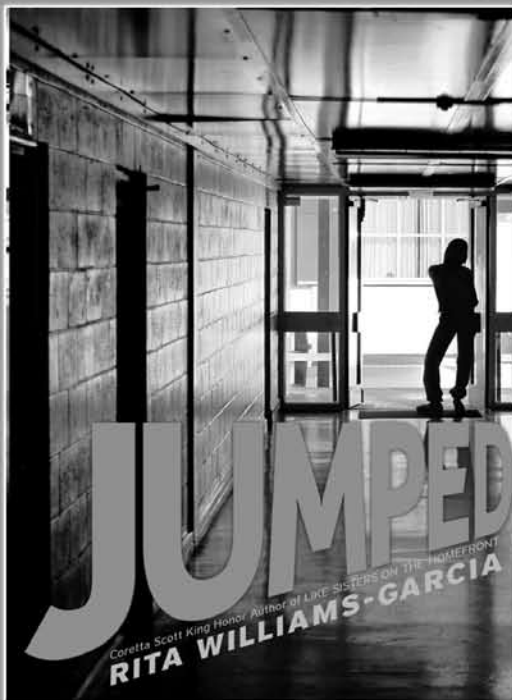
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The Concealed Gift of Our Society: The United States Gives Iraqi Artists a Voice

Weam Namou

Until my first novel was released in 2004, I was not aware of the diverse Iraqi artists who were part of my community. I had mostly lived and worked with non-Iraqi Americans. Yet in the process of promoting the book, I was introduced to a wonderful group of creative and intellectual men and women of Iraqi descent. Their work inspired me to join in the founding of the Iraqi Artists Association (IAA), a nonprofit organization.

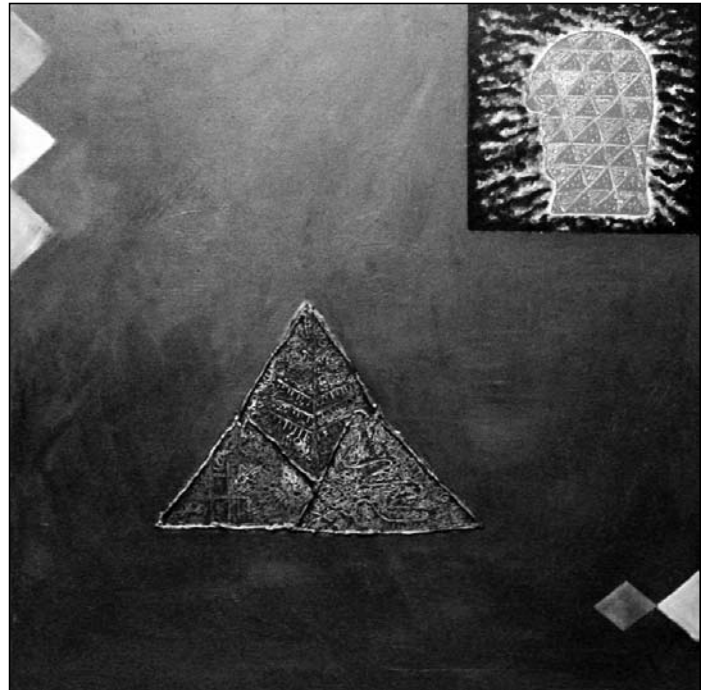
We wanted to broaden appreciation for Iraq's rich history and culture and foster understanding between East and West. With so many social, political, and religious issues regarding Iraq and Iraqis in the news, we felt it had become absolutely essential to address the neglected though highly compelling issues of art and education.

Since the start of the 2003 war, insurgents have been killing Iraqi intellectuals, artists, and professionals.

Since the start of the 2003 war, insurgents have been killing Iraqi intellectuals, artists, and professionals. Those who have survived are today in diaspora. Iraq once was a modern society, with well-developed infrastructure and health and education systems. About two million Iraqis now live abroad, and as many as 50,000 join them every month, according to UN figures.

I was born in Baghdad, Iraq, as a minority Christian and came to the United States at age ten. In my new home, I learned about my heritage, that civilization was born in ancient Mesopotamia over 7,000 years ago. It is where writing, math, science, and astronomy were invented. The first school, law and order, parliament, separation of church and state, map of the world, and the idea of dividing time and space into multiples of 60 started in this historic land. Abraham, the forefather of the "Abrahamic Religions," was from Ur of the Chaldeans in Babylonia (Genesis 15:7).

Today, Mesopotamia, the Biblical Garden of Eden, is a flat desert—thanks to overuse of agricultural land and multiple invasions. Along with the artists who are here telling their stories, I feel that the past is a warning of how our current civilization could destroy the environment of the future. By viewing the East's vision as a counterpoint to that of the West, we can prevent further catastrophe.



Fleeing a Paradise © 2006 by Amer Fatuhi
Acrylic on canvas with mixed media, 36" x 36"

Amer Hanna Fatuhi

Amer Hanna Fatuhi is an artist, historian, and activist of Chaldean (Christian Iraqi) descent. He studied engineering and earned many academic degrees in art and Mesopotamian history. Through his unique art works, academic studies, and aggressive articles, he stood up to the unfairness and mistreatment of Iraqi intellectuals and ordinary Iraqis under Saddam Hussein, and the irrational wars and violence that Iraq has endured since the 1980s. He fled Iraq as a result of political persecution.

When did your relationship/conflict with the Baath Party begin?

I was five or six years old when the Baath Party came into power. From the start, I didn't believe in them. That attitude was largely due to my father. He said, "Anytime someone kills an Iraqi citizen, it means they are not Iraqi citizens." When the Baathists executed former president Abd Al-Karim Qasim, my father said, "Bad people came into power."

Although I often stood up to the Baath Party by defending Iraqi intellectuals, promoting the artists that others were afraid to promote, and by encouraging freedom, I was smart enough to work on a thin line that would protect me from abuse. But as

smart as one was, when negative points against him or her piled up, more questions were raised by the Baath Party, which led to further interrogations. They would come and ask me, “Why don’t you want to join the Arabic Socialist Baath Party?” and I would reply, “I’m not an Arab.”

What consequences did you have to face for not joining the Baath Party?

Not being part of the regime led to having fewer rights than Baathists, who would receive scholarships and higher education. For instance, when in 1986 I won the Iraqi National Flag Competition, the competition was canceled because I am a Chaldean and not an Arab, a Christian and not a Muslim, an independent and not a Baathist.

For years I was interrogated on numerous occasions, but I was never sentenced to jail. I was, however, sentenced to death three times. In the 1990s I endured torture by the regime for several reasons: I was asked to draw portraits of Saddam but refused; I did not participate in an annual Baath Party Exhibit, which was mandatory (anyone who didn’t was considered an enemy and faced execution); I refused, as head of the visual arts magazine, *Fanoon*, to glorify the regime by writing articles about Saddam and his son Oudai.

As an artist, I can’t have anyone lead me.

What led you to eventually flee Iraq?

I had lived in Amman, Jordan, for two years. During this time, many of the Iraqi artists in Amman met at my studio. One of them, a Baathist, returned to Iraq and reported that I was an anti-Baathist and used my studio as the center of an opposition movement.

I returned to Iraq in order to get my wife and four children (two sets of twins) out of the country. That’s when, after another round of torture, a lieutenant warned me, “The next time they take you in, Amer, you’ll never leave. They’ll execute you. Try to leave Iraq.” So I took my family and escaped. Afterwards, I was sentenced to death in absentia. They also withdrew my citizenship.

I came to America, which was a dream of mine since age ten. Who hasn’t dreamt of coming to America?

What was your initial opinion of America, particularly its art?

Coming to America was shocking because what I had read in Iraq about America was quite different. Iraqi artists love and respect works of Rauschenberg, Pollock, and Gaspar. But today’s American art has no soul. It’s just merchandise. Well-known artists are made by the media—produced for money purposes. And it’s not just in American art, but also modern Western art. Today’s artists are copycats of European and famous American artists.

That is why I am surprised that despite the rich history and background of Iraqi artists, Americans look at Iraqi artists’ works as being less worthy. I don’t do artwork to place it in my studio. I want to share it with the public. But because I’m Iraqi-born, Americans don’t have enough of an appreciation for it. My work is post-modernism, my major theme the pictograph, which is the first writing system created in Mesopotamia in 4100 B.C.E. I use techniques related to me, my heritage, and my system. But Americans have an image of Iraq, a stereotype—that it consists of mosques, Aladdin, camels, and Islamists. But that’s not the Iraq that I know best, it’s not part of my culture, it’s not me.

America offers me freedom but at the same time, there are lots of discrimination issues. They will accept me based on their terms. They want to put me in a box. But I cannot bring myself to do that because art and love are similar in that there are no rules.

By Americans allowing various perspectives to interact, they are doing something for themselves. Since they [Americans] are part of humanity, they have to share their point of view with others. There should not be obstacles when it comes to cultural matters. We’re all living in a small street. Although there is law and order, which are very important, there are no borders. What happens thousands of miles away, whether in China, Iraq, or Italy, you learn about it within seconds.

Why do you think Americans should join forces with Iraqi artists and intellectuals?

Art is outside of history, which deals with two factors—time and location. Art has no time. No location. If a

Sumerian statue is shown to someone, it will be accepted by an American, Spanish, Chinese, Russian living in 2008. The person will love it no matter when and where it was made. Art is universal and eternal.

I am sad about what has happened to Iraq, since it is now under four occupiers—Americans, Iranians, Kurds, and Arab fanatics—but I believe that the current chaos is the result of Saddam’s regime. America was just a player seizing an opportunity. But art will have the last word.

Issa Hanna Dabish

Born in 1919, Issa Hanna Dabish was a founding member of the first officially recognized artist organization, “Friends of Art Society,” in Baghdad in 1941. He studied at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad and years later at Syracuse University in New York. Approximately 20 of his art works were housed in the modern art wing of the Baghdad Museum before the museum was looted in 2003. Twelve of these looted art works were later recovered and displayed at the Baghdad Museum of Modern Art on Haifa Street.

Despite his age and inability to walk, Dabish has not stopped

creating art in his current home in Canada. No longer able to work with oils, he continues to execute small art works with pastel, aquarelle, and other materials.

When did your interest for art begin and who or what was your support system?

From the age of five or six years old, I did sculpture from mud while living in Telkaif, a village in northern Iraq. At six we moved to Baghdad and I started drawing. When my family gave me four floos (pennies) to spend in school, I would hide the money and then buy a box of watercolors. Sometimes my mother would catch me, and say, "Oh, he's sketching again!" My parents wanted me to be an engineer or a doctor.

My beginnings were very strong, although I'm mostly a self-taught artist. During middle school, the principal made a special room for students who were good in art, to paint in and exhibit their work at the end of the year.

Art was very good to me. I worked at the Baghdad Museum, cleaning and renovating tablets. I had the opportunity to travel to Europe and learn from their famous art museums. I was also sent to Syracuse for a year and a half, through a project offered by the U.S. in an effort to help third-world countries. There I studied audio-visual aids in education. I was then sent to Washington, D.C. [My supervisor] there was impressed with my work in design and print and offered to pay me eight dollars an hour if I stayed with him. That equates to a hundred dollars an hour today. I said no because I lived well in Iraq and I had the association to deal with. It's not just money that makes one happy but the community that one lives in.

When did you most experience conflict and struggle in your career?

The situation in Iraq became terrible during World War II. Employees' wages were too little to support a family. I was working at the museum and had to find a second job, one outside the government. That's when I began doing screen painting in order to make a living. I opened a shop, where I drew and did commercial work such as posters. I also did photography, which I taught myself through reading about it. I was very famous in photography.

Other than that, during the monarchy and the Baath Party, I felt no pressure to do what I did not want to do. Back then, the government helped artists. They mostly cared about politics. So unless the painter was associated with communism, they let you be.

How do you compare what is happening in Iraq today to what you witnessed during World War II?

The current war in Iraq is very different. During World War II, we were with Germany and against England. There was a strong national soul. Now people come in from outside and steal your home. Or they're allowing themselves to be led by their religious views. Before, we would leave our doors open. No one touched anything.

I am sorry that Iraq, the most elegant country in the world in regard to education and the arts, is now led by chaotic and

barbaric people who kill and kidnap. We, the Assyrians and the Chaldeans, taught people writing and reading and art.

What brought you to Canada and how has immigration affected your work?

I followed my son to Canada in 1993 because life in Iraq became economically and socially intolerable. Here, I looked for galleries for my paintings, but they already had enough artists exhibiting. Then I found someone who had a gallery nearby, and I began teaching seniors and children. I trained them to paint. After two years, the gallery closed. I began working at home, in an apartment. I am sad that I don't have a studio that I can draw in,



Enlil, Nannar, Sumer & Uruk © by Amer Fatuhi
Oil on hardboard canvas with mixed media, 24" x 36"

and it's my dream to have one. I also don't have the opportunity to draw what I like.

I liked the atmosphere of my birth country, and the subjects I draw deal with that country. Today, I'll see something from my window and draw it, or I go to the park to draw a few trees, or still life. I don't have subjects that deal with where I'm currently living.

America and Canada are separated artistically from Europe and the rest of the world. True, they have museums and such. But

as individuals, they are not concerned or have the background for art. They are not educated in that field.

Have you visited Iraq since you left?

I want to, but Baghdad doesn't give hope for someone to visit it.

Paul Batou

Paul Batou's journey as an artist started during high school. In 1989 Batou traveled to Italy to study art, but his father refused to finance his studies. He returned to Baghdad and was accepted in pharmacy school, so he followed that direction. Luckily, the school had a studio for the arts. One of the protocols in Iraq was that each college had a music and art department to be used for students' hobbies.

Why didn't you study art in Baghdad?

The College of Arts was exclusive to the Baath Party. I didn't even bother to apply, because I had no desire to become one of their members. I was fortunate that the director of the studio in the pharmacy school was one of the most famous Iraqi artists, Abdul Ellah Yassin. That's how I practiced and learned art in a more professional fashion. It was as if I'd missed something and then found it. I was hungry to absorb all the knowledge I could in art.

While living in Iraq, did you have any serious encounters with the Baath Party?

After I received my bachelor's degree, my problems with the Baath Party began. They offered me to study nuclear pharmacy in Sweden. In return, I would receive excellent pay and my family would be provided with a nice home and a comfortable life. It was either that—higher education—or the army. It was like having to choose between heaven and hell. I chose hell.

I served in the army five years during the Iraq-Iran war. The first few months I was on the front line, and every night I asked myself if I had made the right or the wrong decision. I played by my principles, and my principle was not to give up my freedom.

Matters changed when I was placed in the medical unit and began focusing on helping as many people as I could. We were in a city that bordered Iran, where there was shelling and wounded men every day. That's when I forgot my doubts and questions. God gave me peace in my heart, and I ended up staying in order to help the people who needed me. I stopped feeling that I made a bad decision, and I felt happy being a pharmacist. I was helping more people.

What was the driving force behind leaving Iraq and coming to America?

Freedom. The turning point in my search for freedom was when I started reading and painting the Epic of Gilgamesh. That story had a major impact on my thinking as a human and as an artist. Gilgamesh and his long journey and search for life, love, and freedom opened my mind and caused me to look back to my roots as a Mesopotamian. I became more determined to love my land and my people, and to fully understand that this is my Iraq, not owned by Shiites, Sunnis, or Kurds. The Christians of Iraq are the natives of Iraq. They carry the heritage of Iraq.

Seeing my friends, mostly artists, writers, and poets in opposition to Saddam's ideas, taken by Baath Intelligence or put in prison or disappearing from the university, affected my thinking. If you search for freedom while under the dictator's rule, either you exit Iraq, or if you can't do that, your alternative is connecting to whatever makes you feel free. To me, the gypsy culture, writing poems, painting, and playing classical guitar provided me with the ideals that I live by and the freedom to express myself among the people who fear God and pray all day.

In 1989 I moved with my family, a wife and a son, to Athens and eventually to the United States. Although it was difficult in the beginning, the image of America being the land of freedom and opportunity lived up to its name. I found American people very helpful. They assisted me as best as they could. One person who played a big role in my success was a friend and pharmacist by the name of Ira Freeman. He offered me a job in his pharmacy even though I had no experience with computers and I didn't know the name of the drugs, since they were different than what I had learned in Iraq. He even provided

me with financial assistance to get me through.

One thing you learn in America is that you have full freedom. Humans with freedom will have more powerful production than humans under oppression.

I'm happy in America, but I miss the friends I left behind in Iraq. I've written many times that I can't feel joyful and happy when my friends in Iraq are sad and worried.

One day my father told me Iraq is your homeland. It was called Mesopotamia before, the land of two rivers. My mom said any land that gives you freedom is your land. Finally, this is my land. I lost my home in Iraq; I don't want to lose my home here. The way to keep my home is to restore the world to peace.

How do you plan to restore the world to peace?

For me art has a universal message, to deliver beautiful pieces with nice colors, logic, and philosophy for all humans. My colors reflect the tone of the Earth, the language of the universe, the cry and pain of the oppressed people.

As an artist, I go back to that civilization, that beauty, and ask myself, "Why do I need to restore that to Iraq?" It's because [Iraq] represents the source of civilization, beauty, and knowledge. My

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love for the U.S. plays an important role in my art. Since 9/11 there has been less freedom in the U.S., affecting the way people live and think. One of my goals is to restore that freedom.

Usually artists, whether they are American, Iraqi, or from any other country, don't like war. Our concern is mostly for the innocent people who will suffer, whether they are the citizens of Iraq or our troops and their families in America.

Why do you think that America is not very familiar with Iraq's art?

Everyone agrees there was a big arts movement in Iraq long before Saddam came to power. Many artists had traveled to Europe and accomplished such extraordinary work there that they were very well known there. While American professional observers who deal with art know about the high standards of art and music in Iraq, the general public does not know. There were not good enough relations with the United States to where programs were created that would send people to Iraq to witness for themselves that culture, or people coming from Iraq to the United States to exhibit.

Since there was no cultural interference or exchange with Iraq, Americans didn't know anything about Iraq's history, culture, and heritage. That's the one reason that the U.S. failed to deliver Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Nadwa Qaragholi

Nadwa Qaragholi was born and raised in Baghdad, and educated both in her native city and the American College in Beirut. Her earliest influence was her mother, a high school art teacher who instilled in her a deep appreciation for color and beauty in all of its manifestations.

She went on to study fine arts in Baghdad under the acclaimed Iraqi artist Miran Al Saadi. After leaving Iraq in 1980, she lived in London, studied art at Santa Monica College and UCLA in Los Angeles, and finally settled in metropolitan Washington, D.C. An active member of the Alexandria Art League for the last 20 years, she has continued to refine her art under the guidance of distinguished sculptor Liberace and notable portrait painter Danny Dawson.

What was the driving force behind your leaving Iraq, and if you plan to return for a visit, are you ready to face the changes that have occurred there?

I didn't leave Iraq for any political or ambitious reasons. My life there was secure. I wanted to study abroad—in Paris originally—but we ended up in the U.S. Once we came here, the [Iran-Iraq] war started so we couldn't go back. It was meant to be. It wasn't planned at all.

I have been to Iraq twice, in 1985 and in 2002.

Describe your relationship with your mother, in regards to you both having a love for art?

My mother was an artist in soul, personality, and appearance, but she was against me becoming an artist, concerned that I

wouldn't have a future in this area. But my generation was different than hers. Some of my friends became very famous.

My parents were U.S. citizens but lived in Iraq. They didn't belong here. When my mother died, I couldn't make it to the funeral. Afterwards, I couldn't express my grief with portraits (I'd spent a substantial portion of my career on painting portraits) so I found another way. I did it through abstract. And I loved abstract for that.

As a portrait painter, it is much harder to do exhibitions. Rarely are people interested in someone else's portrait. So as an abstract painter, I had the opportunity to have my first exhibition in New York in 2006. My father traveled from Iraq to Jordan and then flew to the U.S. to attend. My daughters were already in



The First Paradise © 1993 by Amer Fatuhi
Mixed media on paper, 16" x 11"

the States, so it wasn't difficult for them to be there. But my son was across the world and came to surprise me. I don't even know where he had come from.

How did you feel during the 2003 U.S. led coalition, given that Iraq is your birthplace and the U.S. your home?

I felt pain for both sides. Seeing people get killed is very painful. You feel you can't do anything about it. The only thing you can do is paint. Maybe I'm blessed. I can at least express myself

with my paintings; others can't.

I feel fortunate to have had such a magnificent community of artists in the city of Alexandria. That's where I belong. That's how you grow as an artist—when you're surrounded by artists. Encouragement and motivation, continuous growth and learning—that's what I was lucky to have.

While there was a big movement towards art in Iraq, artists were not exposed to the world. They were enclosed within Iraq and maybe some of the Arabic countries. Now we're very much in demand.

Over two years ago, a friend and I envisioned a project where Eastern and Western art met each other. It's through art that you can feel the humanity of the other side.

For a long time, Americans had no idea where I was coming from. They didn't believe that there are independent women in Iraq. From the beginning they knew who Nadwa is, but they couldn't put the picture with that part of the world. Maybe they thought I'm exceptional, or not the norm. They've only started knowing about Iraq from the last war.

Whose works have been your inspirations?

The *Rubaiyat* was written in the thirteenth century, a time when oppression denied the poet open expression. Omar Al Khayyam's brilliant use of metaphor was the cloak through which he relayed his indignation. I have borrowed his cloak, embedding images behind paint as a voiceless testament to the human spirit's cry against subjugation.

In my latest series of work, inspired by the *Rubaiyat*, I embarked on a journey of dream exploration, one intimately tied to the present inasmuch as it calls forth the past. My paintings are a narration of my innermost thoughts. Very much the way a writer uses his pen, I use my brush to confide a story to my canvas, into which I step to investigate what is intangible and elusive. This series of work is based on my life's experience coupled with the poetry of Khayyam. It is a gateway to the unconscious level of dreams. Like the archeologist who digs with diligence and delicately dusts precious remnants from another time, I am searching for fragments of the past to decipher my feelings of the present. I apply my paint softly, layering transparent veils of color so as not to disturb the dream.

While a strong believer in God, I am always against labels, which can be harmful. I prefer instead to see the goodness in people and not their labels. In this way, I feel I resemble Khalil Gibran, who has also been my influence. I've always felt he was beyond nationality and religion.

How would you describe yourself as an artist?

It takes forever for me to finish a painting because I put my heart into it. My goal is to say, or change, something. I try to express women's issues and my dissatisfaction with women's situations.

Even when I'm not drawing, I'm drawing. I'm one of those who can see faces in everything—in curtains, in the marble, the grain of the marble. Everywhere.

Farouk Kaspaules

Farouk Kaspaules is an Iraqi-born Canadian artist who left Iraq in the 1970s. He obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Ottawa in 1988 and has participated in exhibitions worldwide over the last 20 years, including France, Egypt, Jordan, and Brazil. During that time he has been actively engaged in artist-run centers, organizing and curating exhibits with political and cultural themes.

Over two years ago, a friend and I envisioned a project where Eastern and Western art met each other. It's through art that you can feel the humanity of the other side.

As an artist, did you receive support from family and your community? Who and what has been your primary influence(s)?

In Iraq, when I was in secondary school, I would go through foreign magazines looking for images of works by artists. In 1982 I graduated with an M.S. in Economics from Ottawa University. After working as an economist for two years I realized the need to find a medium to express myself. I decided to study visual arts. The change to art came from a need to express my ideas, my position regarding political events in Iraq, and issues of human rights. I had much encouragement from my friends in Ottawa, who saw the strength of my interest in art. My major influences were Joseph Beuys, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol. Of course, I am influenced

by art theories, such as postmodernism.

What was the leading force behind your leaving Iraq and how has your life as an artist been in Canada?

Like many Iraqis, I left because of internal conditions. I came to Canada, because, as with many Iraqis, if a country gives you permanent residency you stay. You don't choose. Living in Canada, my home now, has opened many possibilities [for] production and teaching. I teach at Ottawa School of Arts. I am involved with my peer artists in art making, exhibiting, discussion, and so on.

How have the wars in Iraq affected your life or your art?

War has been a central topic in my art. I went into studying art and expressing my concerns about Iraq visually. My visual experiments in mixed media focus on concepts of displacement and exile, and employ a complex vocabulary of images, symbols, and aesthetic forms derived from ancient and contemporary Iraq, as well as from my mixed cultural background, Chaldean and Arab.

Using my art, I try to engage the viewer to become aware of the situation in Iraq, and what that means. Sure, every day the media cover news about Iraq. But an exhibition in a gallery about the situation in Iraq is a different dialogue, has a different impact. It is the closeness, and the connection between the work and the viewer. I always make statements about Iraq.

The political in the arts becomes an activity that cannot be separated from lived experience. In my work, I strive to relate

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daily events to broader geopolitical and social questions, thereby affirming the cultural and the political on the one hand, and the artistic position on the other. Remaining intimately linked to my birth country through my past and my art, I preserve my memories through these images while also acknowledging their painfully ephemeral nature—geopolitically speaking, Iraq as I remember it no longer exists.

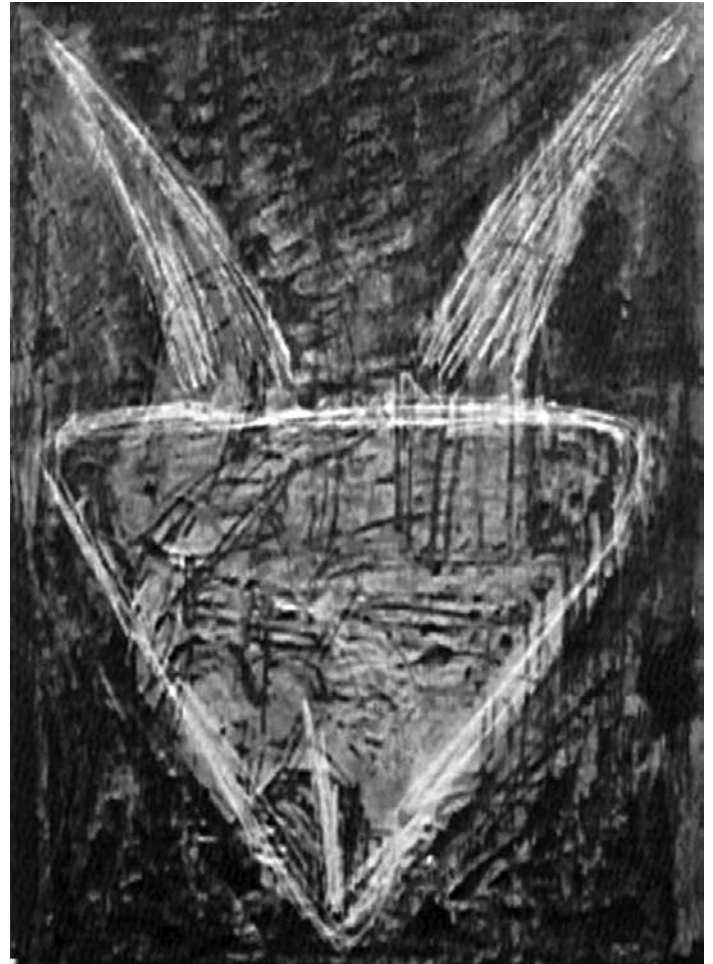
Do you think it's possible for art to help establish peace between East and West?

Any dialogue or interaction between two entities will create the condition for understanding each other's position. I don't think conflict between East and West is inevitable. There are concerns on both sides to be addressed. These concerns are internal and external regarding the East. Through art, and engaging audiences to see their concerns (on both sides), I believe we can create closeness and familiarity with each other and distance ourselves from the rhetoric. Throughout history, art was always a means for bringing people together. This is a first step, and art in any form can do that.

To what do you attribute the West's lack of awareness about Iraq's history and culture?

Iraq has been in the books since day one. A student from any culture has studied ancient Iraq. But I believe an attempt to erase the identity and culture of this country was made to serve rulers, one of which was the previous regime in Iraq. Meanwhile the U.S. pretended not to know anything about that culture, and in their way erased many of its elements as well.

The situation in Iraq is very critical. The country and its people are subjected to very difficult conditions economically, socially, and culturally. People are caught between zealous groups on one hand and the U.S. on the other. Artists are fighting the dogma of certain groups forcing them to produce works of art that do not address the real issues in Iraq.



Bull & Female © 1992 by Amer Fatuhi
Mixed media on paper, 16.25" x 11/25"

Weam Namou was born in Baghdad, Iraq. She received her bachelor's degree from Wayne State University; she studied screenwriting at MPI (Motion Picture Institute of Michigan) and poetry in Prague. She is the president of IAA (Iraqi Artists Association) and the author of three novels, *The Feminine Art*, *The Mismatched Braid*, and *The Flavor of Cultures*. Her articles and poetry have appeared in numerous journals, and she currently writes a regular column for the *Macomb and the Oakland Observer*. 🌐

Righteous Gentiles in Romania and Moldova

Vladimir F. Wertsman

Between 1940 and 1944 the Holocaust in Romania took the lives of 250,000 Romanian Jews and 20,000 Roma (Gypsies) from Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina, and Transnistria, territories at that time under Romanian general Ion Antonescu's fascist regime. Another 135,000 Romanian Jews from Transylvania died, under the administration of the Hungarian admiral and Nazi puppet Miklos Horthy. In 2004, after 60 years of silence or open denial of the Holocaust's existence, Romania's former president Ion Iliescu publicly admitted that the Holocaust was "a shameful chapter in our recent past ... [that] must be neither forgotten nor minimized." Consequently, the Romanian government decreed October 9 as Holocaust Day, observed annually since then; the government also declared Holocaust denial a crime.

But in discussing the Holocaust, one must keep in mind not only the crimes and their perpetrators and victims, not only the regimes that generated and abetted the crimes against Jews and other minorities, but also those special non-Jews, animated solely by their conscience and humanitarian feelings, who spontaneously risked their lives, social positions, jobs, and families to help Jews escape the machinery of death. Such people, declared "Righteous among Nations" by the Yad Vashem Authority in Israel, deserve recognition. In the words of Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel—himself a Holocaust survivor from Romania—"We must know these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust, we must learn from them, and in gratitude and hope, we must remember them."

This article seeks to name and honor those heroes from the areas that comprised Romania between 1918 and 1944, including the territory of Bessarabia—most of which now makes up the Republic of Moldova—and Northern Bucovina and the remainder of Bessarabia—now incorporated into Ukraine. Also included are those Righteous Gentiles from Transylvania, then occupied by Hungary and now part of Romania.

ROMANIA

Royalty: Queen Mother Elena (mother of King Mihai I) told her son that what was happening to Jews during General Ion Antonescu's rule "was awful, that she could no longer stand this." She urged her son to call Prime Minister Mihal Antonescu (no relation to the General) to stop the deportations immediately; later she appealed to Ion Antonescu, and deportations of Jews from Czernowitz, the capital of Bucovina, were temporarily stopped. She also helped to return thousands of surviving Jews, including orphans, from Transnistria at the end of the war.

Diplomats: Konstantin Karadja (Head of Consular Services, Ministry of External Affairs) pressed Prime Minister Antones-

cu to repatriate a few thousand Romanian Jews from Germany, France, Greece, and other countries, shielding them from deportation to German concentration camps. He also instructed Romanian consuls to "extend protection to all Romanians without exceptions."

Florian Manoliu (a commercial attaché in Bern, Switzerland) established a contact with a Salvadoran consul, risking his life and career to transport 1,000 signed blank Salvadoran certificates to be distributed to Jews from Transylvania and Hungary for exit purposes. He also brought the Auschwitz Report—a detailed description of the extermination of Jews, written by two Jewish escapees—to the West and facilitated its wide distribution to churches, members of parliaments, and opinion makers, thus alerting the world about what was happening in Auschwitz.

Military: Theodor Criveanu (a reserve officer in Czernowitz) was in charge of presenting authorities with lists of Jews required to work in the city's ghetto. He risked his life and position to hand out permits to Jews who were not essential to the work force, thus saving them from deportation. He later married the daughter of a Jewish couple he had saved. Posthumously, his son remarked that "my father's life was based on justness; he was a great humanitarian; that was his nature."

Mircea Petru G. Sion (a military court judge) actively intervened to obtain the release of some Jews from labor camps and hid 15 Jews in his home in Iasi and on his family estate outside the city.

Sabin Motora (Romanian gendarmerie officer and commander of two Jewish detention camps in Transnistria) contravened an order to transfer Jews eastward, closer to German troop positions where the Jews faced extermination. Rather, he moved them westward, closer to Romania.

Local government officials: Dr. Traian Popovici (mayor of Czernowitz) defied Ion Antonescu's orders, fearlessly and energetically opposing the ghettoization and deportation of thousands of Jews to Transnistria. He succeeded in preventing the deportation of 19,000 Jews. After World War II his book *Confession of Conscience* described what befell the Bucovina Jews as a "barbarian enterprise," a tragedy with deep implications for the moral consciousness of the Romanian people.

Farmers: Ioana Onisor, her late husband, and two minor children—peasants living near the forest in the vicinity of Bistritsa (Transylvania)—saved the four members of the Kendel family from internment in a ghetto and later deportation to extermination camps by sheltering them in a hiding place especially prepared on her farm.

Alexa Puti, a peasant with two children living near the town of Somcuta Mare (Transylvania), hid Jacob Solomon in a cave at the edge of the forest and brought him vegetables and dairy products—all kosher—along with newspapers.

Iosif Zaharia, a wealthy farmer living near Timisoara, came across a frightened and exhausted 13-year-old yeshiva student from the Arad rabbinate, offered him shelter and false identity papers, and taught him to work on the farm.

Others: Janos Szakadati and his wife, Juliana, owners of a perfume store near Oradea (Transylvania) in the vicinity of a Jewish ghetto, brought food to Jews daily until the ghetto residents were deported. They also hid a Jewish girl in their home from May 1941 until the end of the war.

Vasiliu, an agronomist and farm manager in Alexandrovka (Transnistria), gave meat rations to Jews for a week during the Christmas holiday despite prohibitions and defended a Jew who had been severely beaten by one Lieutenant Cepeleanu. The lieutenant's father, General Cepeleanu, in revenge, sent Vasiliu to the Romania front lines, where the brave agronomist was killed.

Rozalia Antal and her husband, Stefan, from Satu Mare hid five Jews during police raids and later helped transport them to Budapest, where authorities lost their trail.

MOLDOVA REPUBLIC

Teachers: Paramon Lazan, principal and teacher at a secondary school in the city of Nisiporeni, and his wife, Tamara, a teacher in the same school, received an order from Romanian authorities that the school serve temporarily as a collection center for the city's Jews. A few days later, they heard a rumor that the Jews would be killed. Paramon decided to release all the Jews and paid for that decision with his life; he was promptly executed by local authorities.

Vitaly and Aleksandra Morozovskiy, both teachers at a school in Mokra (a town near Rybnitsa) hid a Jewish boy with the last name of Farber in the attic of their home and provided him with all basic needs.

Farmers: Ikim Mazur, Samuil Sparinopta, and Isaak Serebryanskiy, from the village of Broshteny (near Rybnitsa), prepared hiding places for Naum and Raisa Gomelfarb—siblings whose parents were killed in September 1941—by digging a pit under the stable, finding a secret place under a Russian stove, and hiding the children in a barn.

Peotr and Evggeniya Tsurkan, husband and wife from the village of Bulayeshy (Orgeyev district), hid the Tselnik family beginning in December 1941, using their cellar or attic. At the end of 1942 the Tsurkans moved the family to the home of Makar and Akseniya Savchuk, their relatives who lived in the same village.

Others: Yevgenyia Starostina, her daughter Anna Starostina, and her son Pavel Starostina—all from Chisinau (Kishinev)—brought food and clothing to Jewish friends Ida Binder and her daughter Alla, who had been detained in the local ghetto. When the Romanians began to deport the village's Jews to Transnistria, the Starostinas gave Alla shelter and hid her from prying neighbors.

Yefrosina Pozdnyakova and her daughter Zinadia, both from the city of Rybnitsa, supplied food to their friends detained in the ghetto and hid ten Jews in their attic after the Germans moved to liquidate the ghetto.

Ivan Strashnyi, his wife Mariya, and his daughter Kseniya, from Balyavintsy (near Brichany), hid the Gurvis family (Benyamin, wife Ita, and several children) in the attic of their home.

MORE RIGHTEOUS GENTILES

According to Yad Vashem's 2004 statistical release, Romania had 53 Righteous Gentiles and Moldova, 73. However, there are still many other candidates, either pending at Yad Vashem or in preparation, gathering documents before being sent to Yad Vashem. Some examples of the pending cases are as follows:

Sabin Manuila of Bucharest, the former chief of the Romanian Institute of Statistics, succeeded in convincing military authorities responsible for work detachments that he needed 2,800 highly educated Jewish professionals in his office. He obtained for these professionals dispensations from work brigades of manual labor under harsh military rules, where they were threatened with trials for disciplinary violations and even deported.

Colonel Agapiescu, commander of the Cotroceni Concentration Camp near Bucharest, disregarded the official rules in order to reduce the work schedule from nine hours to five hours daily for Jews with families. He also used soldiers under his command and Romanian workers to replace Jews missing during roll call. During an inspection when 96 Jews were declared missing and orders came to deport them to Transnistria, he persuaded higher-ups to rescind the deportation order.

Romanian Orthodox Patriarch Nicodim appealed to the Romanian government to cancel the order forcing Jews to wear the yellow Star of David.

Valentin Carp and T.R. Ispravnicu, both couriers for the Army High Command, carried money and letters from relatives to detainees in the Transnistria camps of Moghilev and Golta. They were caught by the Romanian police and court-martialed.

Romanian army specialists Constantin Barascu and T.R. Latiu went to the Moghilev detention camp during their leave and organized a courageous escape for three Jews by giving military uniforms to two Jewish men and forged papers to a Jewish woman.

Finally, most regrettable and irreversible are the cases of those numerous potential Righteous Gentiles who died long ago and whose relatives and friends neglected to bring them to the attention of Yad Vashem for posthumous recognition.

NOTE

Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were territories of Romania between 1918 and 1940. They were occupied by the Soviet Union for one year and were reincorporated into Romania by the fascist Antonescu regime between 1941 and 1944. After the end of the war, the largest part of Bessarabia became the Soviet Republic of Moldova. The Republic of Moldova gained its independence in 1991 following the breakup of the Soviet Union. The rest of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were incorporated into the territory of Ukraine.

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Vladimir F. Wertsman, Chair of the Publishing & Multicultural Materials Committee of EMIERT/American Library Association, is the author of books on Romanian Americans and of articles on Romanian Jews in the United States (*MCR*, summer 2003), the Holocaust in Romania (*MCR*, winter 2004), the Holocaust in 31 countries (*MCR*, December 2001), and Righteous Gentiles Among the Nations (*MCR*, winter 2003). He was born in Romania and immigrated to the United States in 1967.

The author would like to thank Pietro L. Pavoni, Consul General of Romania in New York City; Andreea Berechet, Deputy Consul General of Romania; and Mirela Roznoveanu of New York University for their help with the research and sources. 🌐

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Testimony to the United Nations

January 27, 2009

Ruth Glasberg Gold

I still cannot fathom the mysterious coincidence of January 27th being proclaimed by the UN as the International Day of Holocaust Commemoration, and how amazing it was to receive an invitation to testify on this very date. Because it was on January 27th, 1942—exactly 67 years ago—that I was left an orphan alone in the world.

I grew up in Czernowitz, the capital of the province of Bukovina, in northern Romania. There I spent the most memorable years of my short, happy childhood. Back then I was a carefree little girl, protected and spoiled by my loving family. I had an older brother, a violin prodigy, whom I worshiped. I loved school; I had many friends and many dreams. But Hitler's Nazi regime brought an abrupt end to my education and my childhood.

I am a child survivor of the Holocaust. But not of Auschwitz or Buchenwald where there were gassings, crematoria, and medical experiments. I am a survivor of Transnistria, which is an area between the Dniester and the Boug rivers in southwestern Ukraine. Hitler gave this territory to fascist Romania, as a reward for its alliance with Germany.

With more than 116 ghettos, concentration camps, and labor camps, it was designated the "ethnic dumping ground of Romania." Unfortunately, this name is not mentioned in any encyclopedia or major history books, and sadly it is not being taught in Holocaust studies. Writing my book and making sure that Transnistria is added to the map of concentration camps at the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., was a mission I took upon myself to honor the victims and the survivors.

My journey into despair started in November 1941 when I was 11 years old. About 2,000 of us were rounded up by Romanian gendarmes, herded towards the train station, and compressed 50 to 80 people into cattle cars. During the next four days of this horrifying journey, some deportees died of suffocation, hunger, and thirst. On the fourth day the train stopped and soldiers unbolted the doors. Starving, exhausted, and filthy, we could barely walk. We were ordered to form a column and were led on a death march through the vast snow-covered fields of Transnistria. We were forced to walk about 25 km a day, and only at night would our escorts allow us to rest, usually in abandoned barns that we shared with the corpses of those who were unable to continue.

The Romanian soldiers deliberately took us on detours to exhaust and further demoralize us. The old, the infirm, and children, who could not keep pace, were left along the roadside. The graven image of frozen naked corpses on both sides of the road was the first of my many horrific experiences to come.

We the children were torn away from the security and warmth of our homes. Our omnipotent parents could no longer protect and console us; they themselves needed consolation. Children symbolize innocence, happiness, honesty, dreaming, laughter, and

frolicking. For us childhood had a different meaning. It meant becoming adults overnight. It meant death, death of innocence, and death of childhood.

I have no tattoo, because I am a survivor of a less organized and methodical plan of annihilation. The Romanian methods were primitive and barbaric, but no less lethal than those of Nazi Germany. They did not bother with tattooing, filming, and photographing their inhuman acts. They threw themselves into action without restraint and with a ferocity that appalled even the Germans. The Romanians' most efficient system was to abandon people without providing shelter, food, or any of the essential necessities for survival, and to let them die an unbearable, slow death caused by illness, exposure, starvation, and despair. In addition to the above, they burned Jews in warehouses, suffocated them in cattle cars, or shot thousands in front of common graves the victims had to dig themselves.

We need to remember the thousands of victims throughout Romania, killed between 1940 and 1941 in brutal pogroms and massacres committed under the aegis of Antonescu's fascist government; 280,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews as well as 11,000 Roma fell victim to the Romanian Holocaust.

December 1941 was a bitter and oppressive winter month. We were worn out by hunger, thirst, and the forced marches, when my family and I finally ended up in a camp called Bershad. It was one of the largest and most infamous camps in Transnistria.

We found shelter in the small room of a partially demolished house with a dirt floor and no doors. In Bershad there was no electricity, running water, or even outhouses. We had to share this room with about 20 other deportees, who soon became victims of the typhus epidemic. There I became a helpless witness to the agonizing deaths of my roommates, my own family included. In three short weeks I lost my father, my 18-year-old brother, and finally my mother. I was left to fend for myself in a hostile, macabre environment—an orphan alone in the world. There was no one to love me unconditionally anymore, no one to care about me.

As the mortality increased, the dead remained piled up against one wall of our room for days, or weeks, until they were picked up by the undertakers. My mother was the last one to die, and her body was left there for two weeks, during which hungry dogs tore at her flesh. When the undertakers finally took the corpses away, they simply dropped them on the frozen grounds of the cemetery.

After the death of my family, my life depended precariously on strangers. Thanks to the kindness of some Bershad inmates, I survived. They rescued orphans from barns and alleys, from ruined houses, and from among piles of corpses. Our guardians housed us in one room with a single plank bed. Boys and girls were packed onto it like sardines. Incidentally, one of those boys, with whom I

shared the misery, is with us today—Michael Surkis.

I am often asked: “How did you survive three years of hunger and life-threatening diseases, without medication, without heat in sometimes 40 degree sub-zero temperatures?” I believe it was the magical power that came prophetically from my mother when she predicted: “Everybody in this room will die. Only you will survive. You must bear witness!” These words kept me alive and preserved my humanity. Above all they enabled me to record, without pencil and paper, all the details of the horror around me, which I later included in my book titled *Ruth’s Journey: A Survivor’s Memoir*.

After the war I joined a Zionist youth commune and escaped from Communist Romania on a freighter bound for the British Mandate of Palestine. But we were shipwrecked in the Aegean Sea and interned by our British rescuers in a Cyprus refugee camp for a year. Finally we were free to continue our journey.

In 1948, the United Nations declared the formation of the State of Israel. I joined in the building of a new kibbutz (collective farm). There, in the nourishing soil of my new homeland, I planted my severed roots, and the healing process began. I served first as a kibbutz medic, then resumed my disrupted education, and completed my studies to graduate as a Hadassah registered nurse.

I was 14 years old when I gave my first written testimony right after liberation. Today, sixty-four years later, I am still testifying, because there are those who dare to deny the horror and reality of the Holocaust, laying a foundation for this kind of inhumanity to be repeated, whether in Cambodia, Bosnia, or Darfur.

I am hopeful that the UN in its quest to prevent terrorism and

genocide will establish a global education foundation that will teach tolerance to children all over the world. I also hope that the silent majority will become the vocal majority.

I wish to dedicate today’s testimony to the 1.5 million Jewish children who perished in the Holocaust; to the survivors of Transnistria; to all the victims of the Romanian Holocaust, Jews and Roma. I hope their souls will find some comfort in knowing that what happened to them and their loved ones will never be forgotten. I also wish to honor the 21,000 righteous gentiles, in particular Dr. Traian Popovici, the mayor of Czernowitz, whose courage saved 19,600 Jews from deportation.

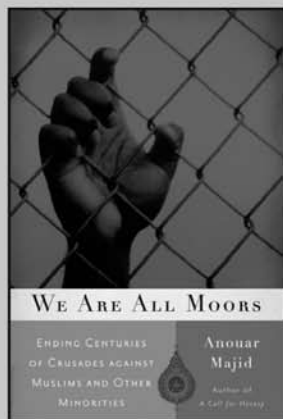
We, the child survivors, are the last witnesses to the most tragic chapter in history. We returned from the abyss of human misery and survived to speak the unspeakable.

By telling our stories, by teaching about the Holocaust and writing our memoirs, we force ourselves to recall the painful past in order to assure future generations of children an innocent and happy childhood free of menacing violence.

Now we want to be assured that our efforts were not in vain. We want to live out our lives secure in the knowledge that these inhumanities will never happen again—not because there are laws that say they are wrong, but because people say so. It is people who should admonish one another with the biblical commandment, “Zachor, Remember!”

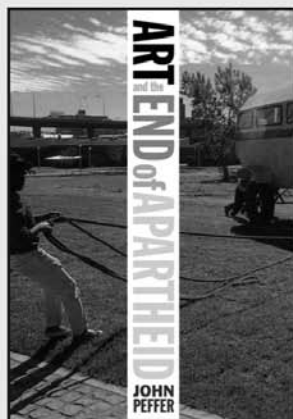
Ruth Glasberg Gold is the author of *Ruth’s Journey: A Survivor’s Memoir* (Univ. Press of Florida, 1997). This account is adapted from her presentation to the United Nations on January 27, 2009. 🌐

CULTURAL COMMENTARY



In *We Are All Moors*, Anouar Majid contends that the acrimonious debates about immigration and Islam in the West are the cultural legacy of the conflict between Christians and Moors.

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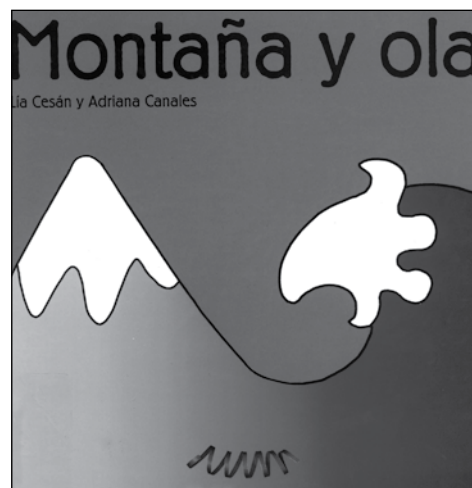
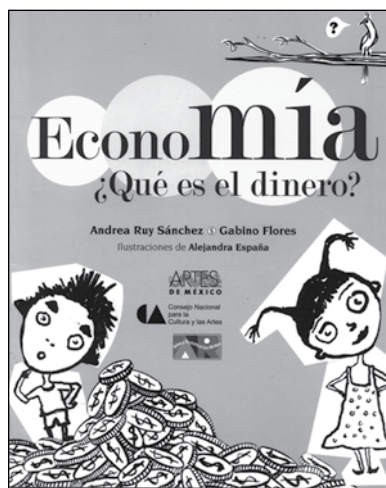
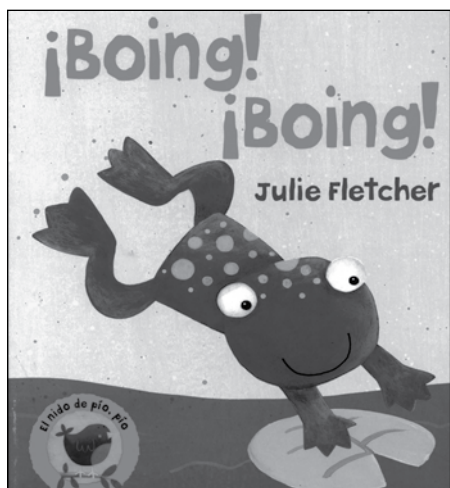
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From *conejito* to Al Capone: Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents

Isabel Schon



From the satisfactions of pets to an *aventura* in Mexico; from sophisticated board books for the young to an unusual flea market for intermediate readers; from a discussion of the importance of the economy for older elementary students to drugs, sex, and hais for adolescents, these recently published books from Mexico, the United States, Argentina, Venezuela, and Spain will appeal to a wide diversity of Spanish speakers or Spanish learners.

For the Youngest Readers

Algarra, Alejandro. *Cuidemos a nuestra nueva ranita* (Let's Take Care of Our New Frog). ISBN 978-0-7641-3880-5.

———. *Cuidemos a nuestro gecko leopardo nuevo* (Let's Take Care of Our New Leopard Gecko). ISBN 978-0-7641-3878-2.

García Sabatés, Berta, and Mercè Segarra. *Cuidemos a nuestro nuevo hámster* (Let's Take Care of Our New Hamster). ISBN 978-0-7641-3873-7.

Segarra, Mercè, and Berta García. *Cuidemos a nuestro conejito nuevo* (Let's Take Care of Our New Bunny). ISBN 978-0-7641-3876-8.

Ea. vol.: Barcelona: Gemser; dist. by Barron's, 2006. 35 pp. Illus. by Rosa María Curto. Series: Cuidar y Proteger. \$6.99 (pb). Gr. 2-4.

Young children are introduced to the fun and responsibility of pet ownership through children who get a pet of their own.

Cartoon-style ink-and-watercolor illustrations, easy-to-understand texts, and appended guidelines sections with advice and basic information make these paperbacks just right for pet lovers. The satisfactions and responsibilities of owning and keeping pet frogs healthy and active are described in *Cuidemos a nuestra nueva ranita*; pet geckos in *Cuidemos a nuestro gecko leopardo nuevo*; pet hamsters in *Cuidemos a nuestro nuevo hámster*; and pet rabbits in *Cuidemos a nuestro conejito nuevo*. A previous title in this series is *Cuidemos a nuestro gatito nuevo* (Let's Take Care of Our New Kitten).

Atwood, Margaret. *Arriba en el árbol* (Up in the Tree). Caracas: Ekaré, 2008. 30 pp. Trans. from English by Miguel Azaola. ISBN 978-980-257-338-7, \$9.95 (pb). Gr. Preschool-2.

Maintaining the charm and whimsy of the English edition first published in Canada in 1976, Azaola's rhythmic yet relaxed Spanish rendition joyfully captures the feelings of two boys as they rejoice and later worry about their home up in a tree. Beginning Spanish-speaking readers (and Spanish learners) will especially appreciate the short sentences and well-known and soothing Spanish expressions: *¡Y así, colorín colorado, ¡podremos vivir sin cuidado!*

Cesán, Lía. *Montaña y ola* (Mountain and Wave). 32 pp. ISBN 978-968-5950-14-5.

———. *Todas las nubes* (All the Clouds). 39 pp. ISBN 978-968-5950-23-7.

Ea. vol.: México: Serpentina, 2007. Illus. by Adriana Canales. Series: Colección Palabrario. \$9.95 (pb). Gr. 1–3.

Combining wordplay and the characteristics of hills, mountains, and mountain ranges (in *Montaña y ola*) and clouds in the sky (in *Todas las nubes*), these imaginative paperbacks with colorful, computer-generated graphics can be used as vocabulary builders, as creative interpretations, or as intuitive views of nature.

Fletcher, Julie. *¡Boing! ¡Boing!* (Boing! Boing!). ISBN 978-84-9825-297-2.

———. *Jungla de colores* (Jungle Colors). ISBN 978-84-9825-296-5.

———. *¡Muuu! ¡Muuu!* (Moo! Moo!). ISBN 978-84-9825-295-8.

———. *1, 2, 3 . . . ¡Mar!* (1, 2, 3, Sea!). ISBN 978-84-9825-298-9.

Ea. vol.: Barcelona: Combel, 2008. 14 pp. Illus. by the author. Series: El Nido de Pío Pío. \$9.95. Ages 1–4.

These well-constructed board books are sure to delight toddlers as they are exposed to the sounds of five garden animals (in *¡Boing! ¡Boing!*), to the colors of five jungle animals (in *Jungla de colores*), to the sounds and characteristics of farm animals (in *¡Muuu! ¡Muuu!*), to numbers 1–5 through one dolphin, two turtles, and other sea animals (in *1, 2, 3 . . . ¡Mar!*). The easy rhyming text and colorful paper sculptures against a flat background make this series, originally published by Caterpillar Books, London, a joyous listening/reading/learning activity.

Krebs, Laurie. *¡Nos vamos a México! Una aventura bajo el sol* (Off We Go to Mexico! An Adventure in the Sun). Cambridge, Mass.: Barefoot Books, 2006. Illus. by Christopher Corr. Trans. by Yanitzia Canetti. 30 pp. ISBN 978-1-84686-014-8, \$8.99 (pb). Gr. Preschool–2.

This is a simple Spanish rendition of a joyous adventure to Mexico in which children are introduced to Mexico's beautiful tourist sites, spectacular topography, fun-filled festivals and rich history. Each double-page spread resonates with the bright colors and motifs of the topic discussed. A map and important facts about Mexico and its history complement this *aventura* in Mexico.

Pohl, Kathleen. *Descubramos Estados Unidos* (Looking at the United States). ISBN 978-0-8368-9068-6.

———. *Descubramos Polonia* (Looking at Poland). ISBN 978-

0-8368-9069-3.

———. *Descubramos Venezuela* (Looking at Venezuela). ISBN 978-0-8368-9077-8.

Ea. vol.: Pleasantville, N.Y.: Gareth Stevens, 2009. 32 pp. Trans. by Adriana Rosado-Bonewitz and Luis Albores. Series: Descubramos países del mundo. \$26.00. Gr. 2–4.

Like the previous 21 titles of this introduction to the countries of the world, these highlight aspects of the geography, weather, cities, people, and lifestyle of the United States, Poland, and Venezuela. Each book includes an easy-to-understand text, color candid photos, important facts, a glossary (albeit without definite articles, a serious limitation), web sites, and an index.

Tullet, Hervé. *Juego de azar* (Game of Chance). ISBN 978-84-96629-63-9.

———. *Juego de construcción* (Construction Game). ISBN 978-84-96629-64-6.

———. *Juego de formas* (Shapes Game). ISBN 978-84-96629-65-3.

———. *Juego del circo* (Circus Game). ISBN 978-84-96629-62-2.

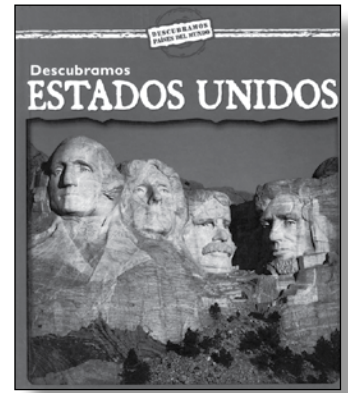
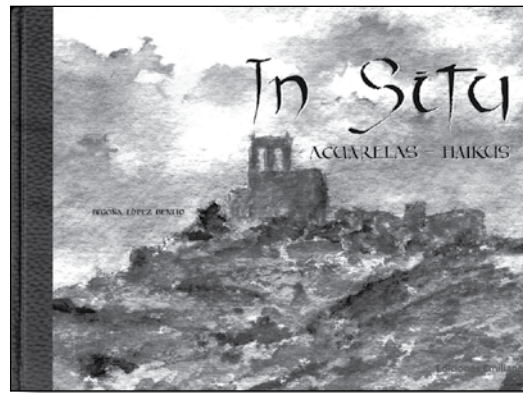
Ea. vol.: Madrid: Kókinos, 2007. 16 pp. \$14.95. Gr. Preschool.

These sophisticated board books with appropriately placed cutouts and bright watercolors against flat backgrounds will encourage the very young to play with abstract figures (in *Juego de azar*); to play with the construction of various objects (in *Juego de construcción*); to play with forms as they touch and feel a circle, a square, a triangle, and other interesting shapes and silhouettes (in *Juego de formas*); and to play with circus acrobats, clowns, and animals (in *Juego del circo*). Originally published by Éditions du Panana, Paris, these are not conventional board books. Adults looking for unusual board books that encourage more participation from the young will find Tullet's series creatively engaging.

For the Middle Grades

Lima, Juan. *El mercado de las pulgas* (The Flea Market). Buenos Aires: Atlántida, 2008. 26 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 978-950-08-3559-6, \$18.95. Gr. 2–5.

Juan, *poeta, mandamás y portero* (poet, big shot, and doorman), welcomes the reader to the Flea Market. In a lighthearted, rhyming text Juan describes *los Puestos más insólitos./maravillas nunca vistas* (the most unusual booths,/wonders never seen) such as antique mirrors where spiders abound, cactus from Mar del Plata and Tikal, a sun pyramid, a flower goddess, singing sirens, a solar eclipse, and other novelties. And he concludes, *compren raro y ba-*



rato (buy odd things and get bargains). Three-dimensional collages, color photographs, and detailed, black-ink illustrations add whimsy and immediacy to this visit to the *Mercado de las Pulgas*.

Millán, José Antonio. *¡Me como esa coma!* (I'll Eat That Comma!). Barcelona: Serres/RBA, 2007. 32 pp. Illus. by Emilio Urberuaga. ISBN 978-84-7871-934-1, \$15.95. Gr. 2-5.

With humor and whimsy and with appropriate cartoon-like black-ink and watercolor illustrations, Millán, a well-known linguist, illustrates the importance of the comma in the Spanish language. In contrasting simple examples, he highlights how the use of the comma can change the meaning of a sentence according to its placement—to indicate a separation of either ideas or elements within the structure of a sentence. On the left page, for example, the text states: *Perdón imposible, que cumpla su condena* (Pardon impossible, sentence to be executed), showing an anxious prisoner behind bars and a king signing a sentence. On the facing page the text reads: *Perdón, imposible que cumpla su condena*. (The comma having moved, the sentence now means: Forgive me, it is impossible to carry out the sentence), with the illustration showing an elated prisoner walking out of prison. The appended comments, which explain further why each placement of the comma alters the meaning, will be of special interest to serious Spanish learners. Not-so-serious grammarians will enjoy the jokes and perhaps intuitively grasp the sometimes-elusive comma.

Olmos, Gabriela, ed. *Zoología poética* (Poetic Zoology). Mexico: Artes de México, 2007. 47 pp. Illus. by Luis Manuel Serrano. ISBN 978-970-683-262-7, \$11.95 (pb). Gr. 2-6.

Lighthearted and fun, this delightful collection of animal poems features mostly Mexican poets, both contemporary and classic, along with one Spanish—Federico García Lorca—and Argentinean—María Elena Walsh. The poems give voice to the silence of bees (in “La colmena” by Jaime Torres Bodet), the calm of hummingbirds (in “La exclamación” by Octavio Paz), the song of nightingales (in “El ruiseñor” by José Juan Tablada), the disposition of cows (in a poem by María Elena Walsh), and other crit-

ters. Serrano’s colorful, eye-catching mixed media collages add depth and interest to this poetic zoology. Artists and poets-to-be will enjoy it.

Ruy Sánchez, Andrea, and Flores, Gabino. *Economía: ¿Qué es el dinero?* (Economics: What Is Money?). México: Artes de México, 2007. 48 pp. Illus. by Alejandra España. ISBN 978-970-683-267-2. \$10.95 (pb). Gr. 3-5.

Through simple explanations, attractive cartoons, and color photos, readers are introduced to basic economic concepts. Each page begins with straightforward questions that introduce the topic, such as, *¿Quiénes son los actores en la economía?* (Who are the actors in the economy?) and *¿Qué es el costo de oportunidad?* (What are the opportunity costs?). Especially well conceived are words and phrases in bold that highlight key terms or clarifications. Selectors in the United States should note: Because it is published in Mexico, it correctly states that the *Banco de México* (Bank of Mexico) is the central bank *de nuestro país* (of our country). It does not include a glossary. And, occasionally, the authors conclude sections with patronizing or cutesy comments, such as *Suena bien, ¿no?* (Sounds great, or not?). Despite these caveats, the scarcity of simple books on economics for young Spanish speakers makes this one an almost necessary read—especially nowadays.

Thompson, Susan Conklin; Thompson, Kevin Steven; and López de López, Lidia. *Mayan Folktales/Cuentos folklóricos mayas*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. 179 pp. Bilingual ed. World Folklore Series. ISBN 978-1-59158-138-3, \$40.00. Gr. 5-9.

Beginning with a straightforward introduction (in English only) to the geography and history of Maya civilization up to Maya areas today, including food and recipes, this joyful collection of 27 brief traditional stories (in both English and Spanish) about animals, masters, people, and the supernatural is both appealing and entertaining. Despite the at times blurry and unclear black-and-white photos, this is a valuable contribution to the oral storytelling tradition of the Maya from southern Mexico, Guate-

mala, Belize, western Honduras, and western El Salvador.

For Adolescents

Anónimo. *Pregúntale a Alicia* (Go Ask Alice). México: Editorial Lectorum/Dist. by L.D. Books, 2007. 153 pp. ISBN 978-970-732-218-9, \$8.95 (pb). Gr. 8–12.

Interestingly, this Spanish rendition still identifies the author as “Anonymous” and never mentions Beatrice Sparks. Nevertheless, Spanish-speaking teens who were not exposed to “problem novels,” so popular in the United States beginning in the 1960s, will be intrigued by the grim “true” diary of an addicted adolescent. In the same brisk tone of the English original, Alicia describes her lonely, daunting journey into the world of LSD, *marijuana*, *ácido*, *hachís*, and casual sexual encounters. Although references to “hippies” may seem dated, the slang terms are not—for instance, *pazguato*, *estúpido*, *cabrona vida*, and *maldita sea*.

Bernard, Heliane. *Guernica* (Guernica). Sevilla: Kalandraka, 2008. 42 pp. Illus. by Olivier Charpentier. ISBN 978-84-96388-76-5, \$21.95. Gr. 6–12.

In a most compelling and forceful manner, this large-format publication, originally published by Editions Michalon, Paris, depicts the worldwide condemnation engendered by the German bombing in April 1937 of Guernica, a town in the Basque region of northeast Spain. A brief, austere text (one paragraph per page) and bold, thick two-tone brush strokes against a white background highlight Pablo Picasso’s outrage that inspired one of his most famous paintings. An informative afterword includes a historical note, a biography of Picasso, and an analysis of his acclaimed masterpiece, “Guernica.” History buffs and artists-to-be will applaud.

Chiarelli, Pablo. *Dinosaurios: Un mundo perdido* (Dinosaurs: A Lost World). Buenos Aires: Ediciones Continente, 2008. 128 pp. Illus. by Jorge Blanco. ISBN 978-950-754-253-4, \$19.95 (pb). Gr. 6–10.

This is not another children’s book about dinosaurs; rather, it is an informative survey of various carnivorous or herbivorous animals that dominated the Earth for more than 240 million years. Written in clear, easy-to-follow prose by an expert in paleontology and illustrated by a specialist in fauna fossils, the book provides up-to-date information about the origin, distribution, evolution, and special characteristics of more than 60 types of dinosaurs. Serious Spanish-speaking dino-enthusiasts will appreciate the author’s straightforward comments regarding widely held misconceptions. For example, Chiarelli urges readers to give up

la antigua concepción de dinosaurios escamosos, verdes o grises (the old-fashioned concept of green or grey scaly dinosaurs) and imagine a colorful world and dinosaurs appearing with colors like animals of today. Well-written labels and sidebars, easy-to-understand charts, and an appealing design complement this comprehensive guide to dinosaurs. Although a selected bibliography of both English and Spanish sources is included, the book, unfortunately, lacks an index.

Choldenko, Gennifer. *Al Capone me lava la ropa* (Al Capone Does My Shirts). Miami: Santillana, 2008. 229 pp. Trans. by Una Pérez Ruíz. ISBN 978-1-60396-178-3, \$10.95 (pb). Gr. 6–8.

Reflecting the humor and fast pace of the original, this carefree Spanish rendition is just as engaging as the highly acclaimed historical novel first published in English in 2004. When 12-year-old Moose Flanagan and his family move to Alcatraz Island in 1935, he has to confront not only a difficult environment, but also a challenging, autistic sister. Spanish-speaking teens will especially enjoy the many memorable characters and ludicrous situations that adolescents around the world seem to find themselves constantly involved in, even if they don’t include such well-known inmates as Al Capone. Considering the scarcity of compelling novels for Spanish-speaking teens, this one should not be overlooked.

López Benito, Begoña. *In Situ: Acuarelas, haikus* (In Situ: Watercolors, Haikus). Logroño, Spain: Ediciones Emilianenses, 2008. 103 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 978-84-612-5238-1, \$29.95. Gr. 6–12.

The beauty of the Spanish countryside is captured in exquisite watercolor paintings, each accompanied by a simple, eloquent haiku. From the *profundo y sutil* (deep and subtle) sparkle after a rain shower to the slow-moving tide, from fruit with *sabor a regalo* (taste of gifts) to the dance of rocks against the clouds, these are joyous views of La Rioja, Pontevedra, Logroño, Cantabria, and other regions and provinces in Spain.

For additional high-quality books in Spanish (or books in English about Latinos) for children and adolescents, please visit the Isabel Schon International Center for Spanish Books for Youth, San Diego Public Library; web site: www.isabelschoncenter.org.

Isabel Schon is the founder and director of the Isabel Schon International Center for Spanish Books for Youth at the San Diego Public Library, and most recently the author of *Recommended Books in Spanish for Children and Young Adults: 2004–2008* (Scarecrow Press, 2009). 📖

Continuing Diversity: A Column of Periodical Reviews

D. Waheedah Bilal

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The Southern Quarterly is, as its title states, a journal that covers the arts of the American South, a region that has undeniably offered much historically and artistically to the world. The Summer 2008, Special Issue (Volume 45, Number 4) is devoted to *The Legacy of Emmett Till*, and it is indeed a keeper. It is divided into essays, interviews, reflections, poetry, a film review, and book reviews, and within each section, noted contributors offer their perspectives on the importance of that vicious mid-twentieth-century hate crime. Emmett Till's short, tragic life became what many consider to be the catalyst that set the modern civil rights movement in motion.

There are four cogent and thoughtful essays in the collection, two of which are "A New Fear Known to Me: Emmett Till's Influence and the Black Panther Party," by Harvey Young and "Sacred Vision and Dramatic Space: Voices, Time, and History in *The Face of Emmett Till*," by Philip C. Kolin. Young examines the psychological ramifications of Till's murder on African-American youth in the 1950s, and makes it obvious that some were inspired to react with an increased militancy. He notes, "the places of origin of leading members of the organization [the Black Panther Party] [all] ... from the South" (38). These founders and leaders of the Black Panther Party had direct experience with Jim Crow segregation and sought to inculcate a "new hope" on those coming after them. The image of Till's disfigured corpse was published nationwide in 1955; rather than suffering alone or with her family, Mamie Till-Mobley (then Bradley) let the world see her pain and grieve with her. For Till's contemporaries, it was the beginning of a period where violence against Black bodies became very public—something that showed up each evening on the news, rather than being discussed in hushed tones among family as cautionary tales.

Kolin's piece is a pivotal essay which recounts Mamie Till-Mobley's near 50-year campaign for justice for her son's death. She used many forums to accomplish this, but Kolin's focus is on the play, *The Face of Emmett Till*, which he describes as "best seen as a sacred tragedy illuminating Till-Mobley's theology of her son ... representing the symbolic crucifixion of a Christ-like Emmett Till" (81).

There is also an ominous photographic essay by Jianqing Zheng entitled "A Guided Tour Through Hell: A Photographic Essay of Emmett Till's Mississippi Delta." Despite the passage of 54 years, the images still recall "[t]he memory of Till's nearly unrecognizable face shown in *Jet* in 1955." (119).

Vincent F. A. Golphin has collected reactions to the Till murder for an unpublished manuscript, *Sometimes It Causes Me to Tremble: Emmett Till and the Force of American Memory*, in which he illustrates how many African Americans "continue to live with a fear and dread of violence or oppression, and a deeply rooted desire to see an end to racism" (125). There are enlightening excerpts from three of the stories included in this Special Issue, under the title "Emmet Till and the Force of American Memory."

Also included is "An Interview with David Jordan on Emmett Till," conducted by Mamie Fortune Osborne. Twenty-one years old when Till was murdered, Jordan, now a state senator in Mississippi, was among the few African Americans who attended the trial for J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant. He also recalls encounters with Byron De La Beckwith, who killed Medgar Evers. He notes that he felt "maladjusted over what I had seen in my childhood" (146), that is, events of personal racism and prejudice, and that the "Emmett Till case was enough to create something in me to try to make a difference" (147). His testimony provides further evidence that Emmett Till's death had far-reaching implications.

The poetry section consists of 24 finely crafted works. They include "14 Haiku" by Sonia Sanchez, "Kwansaba for Emmett Till" by Nancy Shakir, Lindsay Marianna Walker's, "To the Murderers of Emmett Till," and Kim Arrington's "When I Consider the Open Casket," to name just a few. Since poetry is a format particularly suited to remembrance, this section works extremely well, and I personally wished it were longer; the poems are diverse in style and approach, yet all are memorable and evocative.


The film review comprises the essay, "*The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till* (2005): A Film by Keith Beauchamp," by Christopher Campbell. Apparently Beauchamp became interested in the Till case based on his own experiences, when as a seventeen-year-old African American in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he was beaten by police for dancing with a young White woman. Sixteen years later, at the age of 33, he released *Untold Story*, which was based on interviews with Emmett's mother, his friends and relatives, and historians and civil rights activists. Campbell notes that the "documentary provides evidence that the true heroes of the era were the victims of the South's oppressive justice system who demonstrated remarkable nobility in the face of overwhelming prejudice and injustice" (173). The U.S. Department of Justice reopened an

investigation into Emmett Till's murder, established in part because of Beauchamp's research; however, no one was ever convicted.

Margaret Earley Whitt reviews Emmett Till in *Literary Memory and Imagination*, edited by Harriet Pollack and Christopher Metress, noting that the book's "editors argue that no episode before or since has shaken America's literary conscience as much" (178). The volume includes an annotated bibliography of "140 literary works—novels, stories, poems, plays, songs, musical scores, a movie, and television scripts—inspired by the Emmet Till murder" (178). In the book, Metress has even included a web site so that others may contribute to the list. The book sounds like one that should be integrated into collections that aspire to be inclusive.

David R. Davies reviews *Emmett Till and the Mississippi Press* by Davis W. Houck and Matthew A. Grindy, a book that should be interesting to anyone studying the history of the period. Houck and Grindy examine how the press coverage changed from initially sympathetic to hostile once the NAACP became involved. Also informative is "the transformation of Carolyn Bryant" (178), the young woman Till was accused of molesting. She went from potential accomplice in murder and kidnapping to "helpless victim" (179). Apparently Till, who was initially a murder victim, subsequently became an unsympathetic Black male in photographs that were closely cropped so as to resemble mug shots. Reviewer Davies notes that the book "tends more toward an analysis of rhetoric than a traditional historical treatment" (179); however, that is the case with much academic discourse these days.

The issue is recommended for those interested in the Emmett Till case and its historical impact past and present.

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