

Flying Kites & Other Life-Death Matters

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Global Perspectives
on Death
in Children's Literature



*Edited by
Lesley D. Clement and Leyli Jamali*

ROUTLEDGE



Images from
Drachen Foundation
Drachen.org

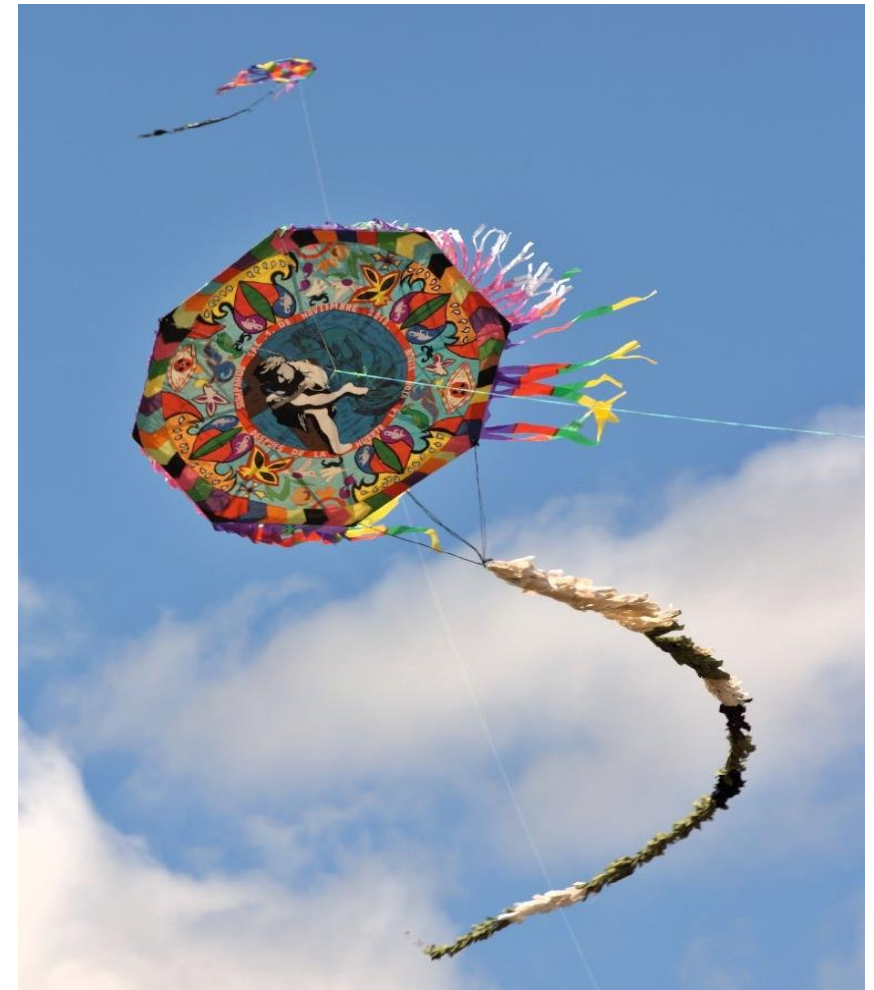


Images from www.rutahsa.com

Christopher Ornelas,
*Wings of Resistance:
The Giant Kites of
Guatemala* (Drachen
Foundation, 2013)



'When we are flying kites, the string is a symbol of life being flown up into heaven, so that there is a contact between the heart of the earth and the heart of heaven. It doesn't represent the life of one person, but the lives of many people' (Maya spiritual leader, quoted in Ornelas, *Wings of Resistance*).



Guatemalan *barriletes gigantes* (giant kites) with *telegramas* (messages) for the dead
← Santiago and Sumpango ↗

← *Kite Flying* by Suzuki Harunobu, 1766
(Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City)



Polynesian Kite

Teizo Hashimoto
kite representing
Kintaro and carp →





Guatemalan Kite Makers

Their kites 'frame the way that history' – their history – is being written. Drawing upon Susan Sontag's discussion of Holocaust photographs in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Picador, 2003), we could conclude that, 'rather than reinforcing the narrative "of death, of failure, of victimization," these kites "invoke the miracle of survival"' (Ornelas).



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- **Part One: Adapting Death for Changing Contexts**
- **Part Two: Ritualizing Death and Life After Death**
- **Part Three: Politicizing Death**
- **Part Four: Picturing Death**
- **Part Five: Metaphorizing Death**
- **Part Six: Playing with Death**

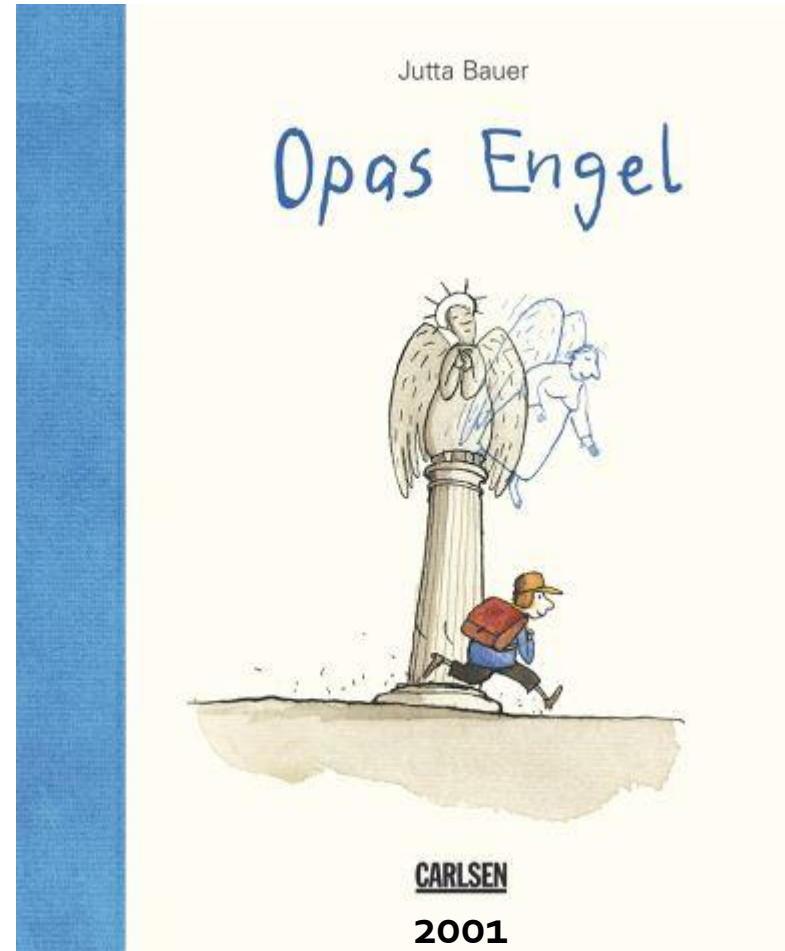
THEME #1

ROLE OF MENTORS OR ELDERS



Guatemalan *barrileteros* (master kite makers)

Grandparents



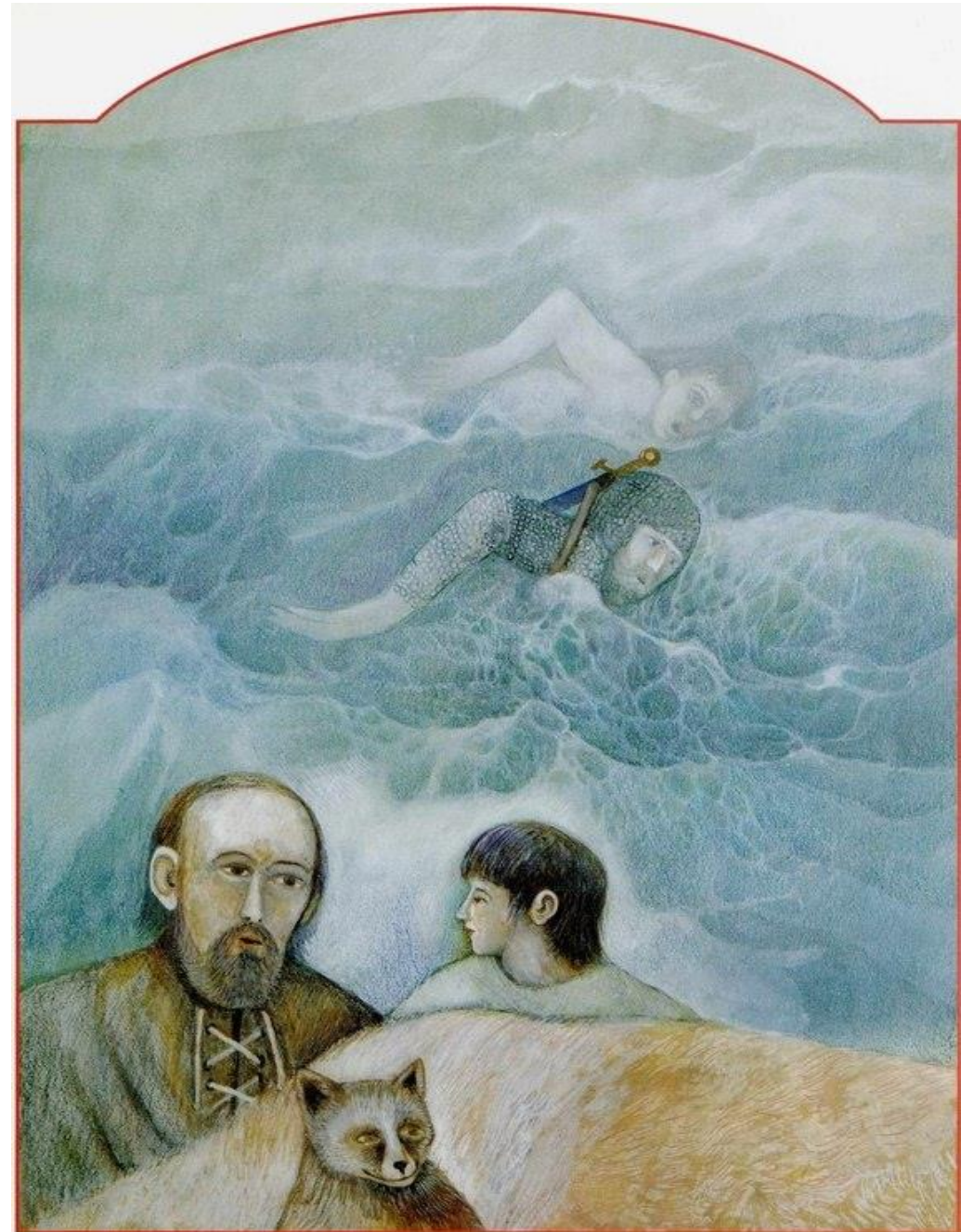
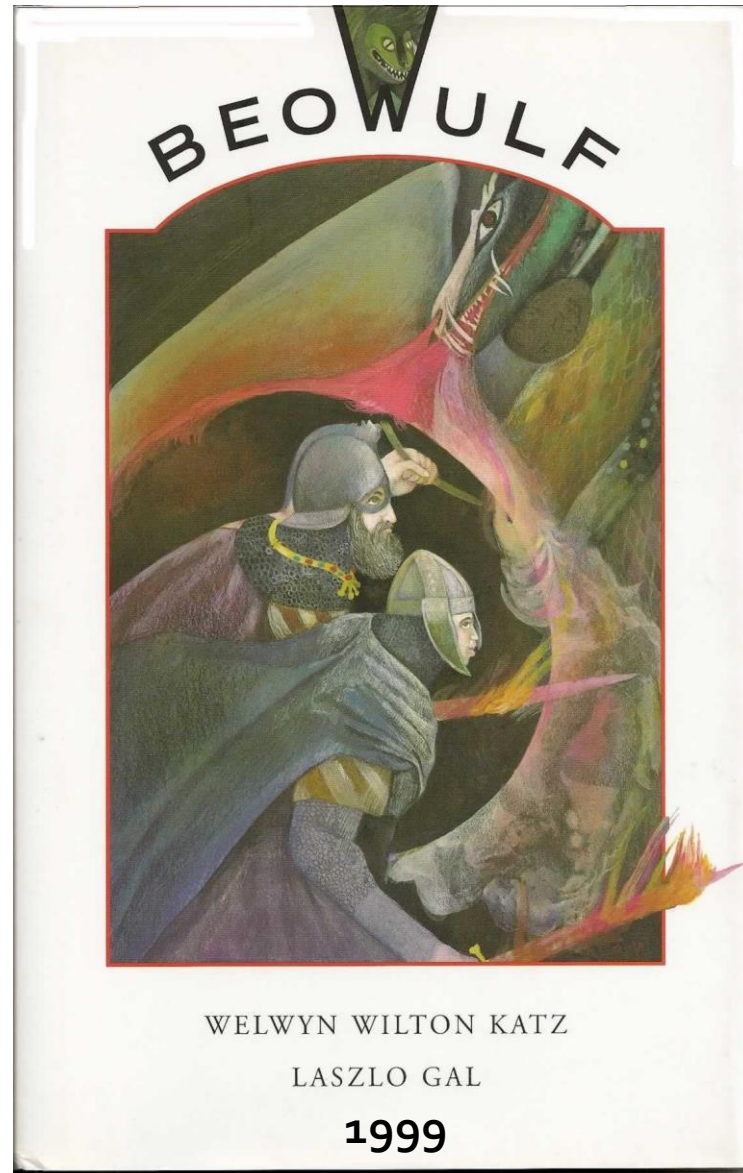
Boy, no one could do anything to me ...



Chapter 1

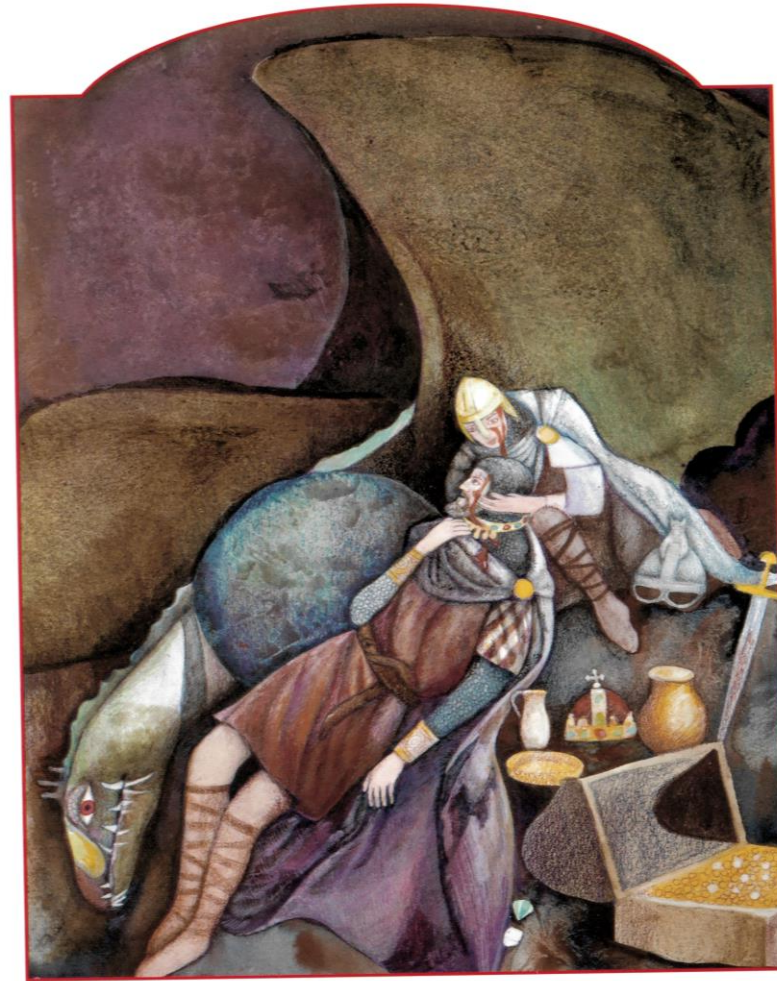
Daniel Pinti,

'Thus did hearth-companions grieve their lord's fall':
Death, Mourning,
and the
Children's *Beowulf*



Beowulf:

**'Death is no
terrible thing for
one who has lived
well.'**

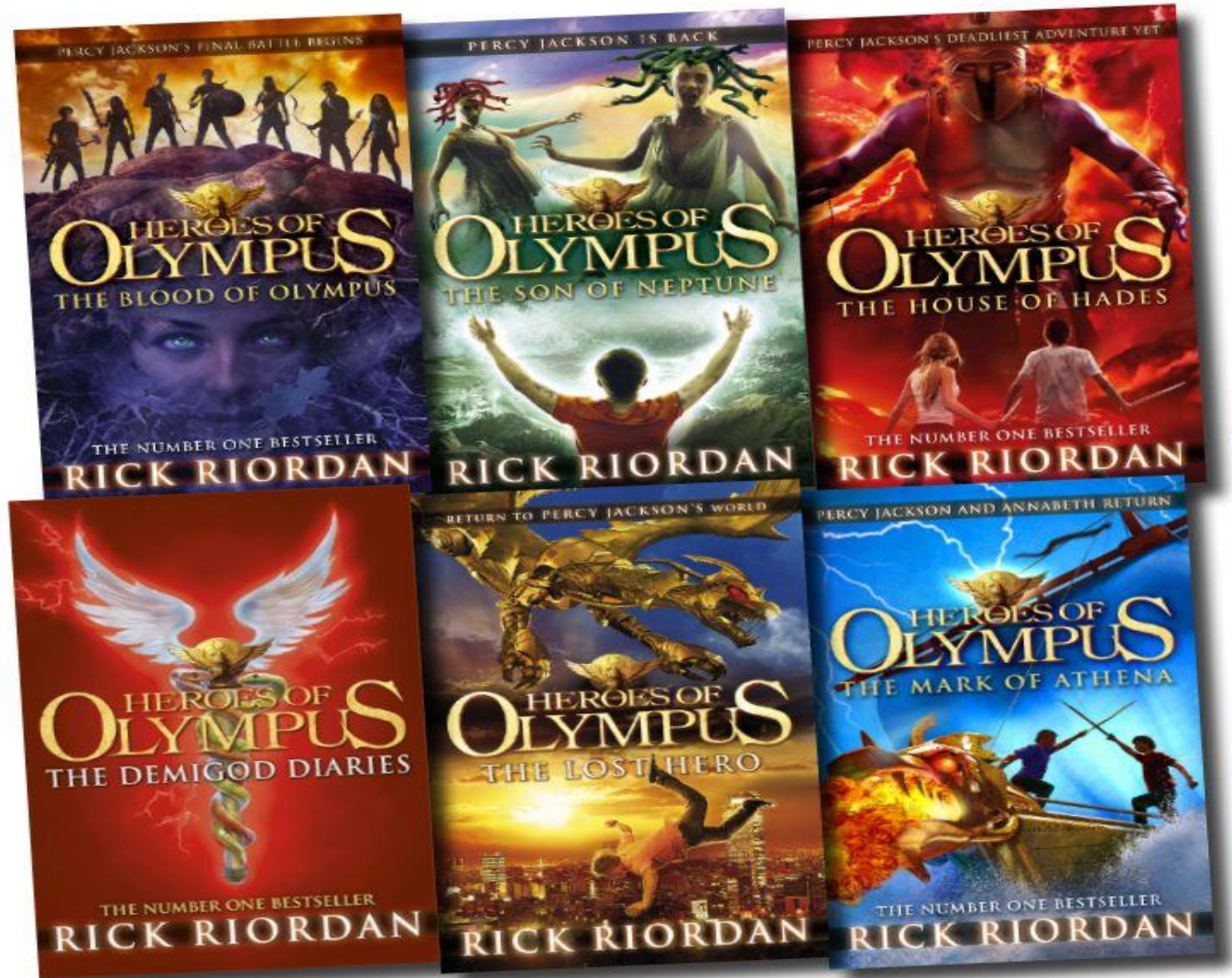


'What one sees in various but striking ways in contemporary versions of *Beowulf* for young readers are opportunities to imagine personal and cultural mourning, whether it be in terms of denial, celebration, or critique' (Pinti).

Chapter 2

Ginger Stelle,

Loyalty, Honor,
and Death in Rick
Riordan's *Olympus*
Series



Modern fairy tales ...

THEME #2

PLASTICITY OF BELIEFS, TRADITIONS, AND RITUALS

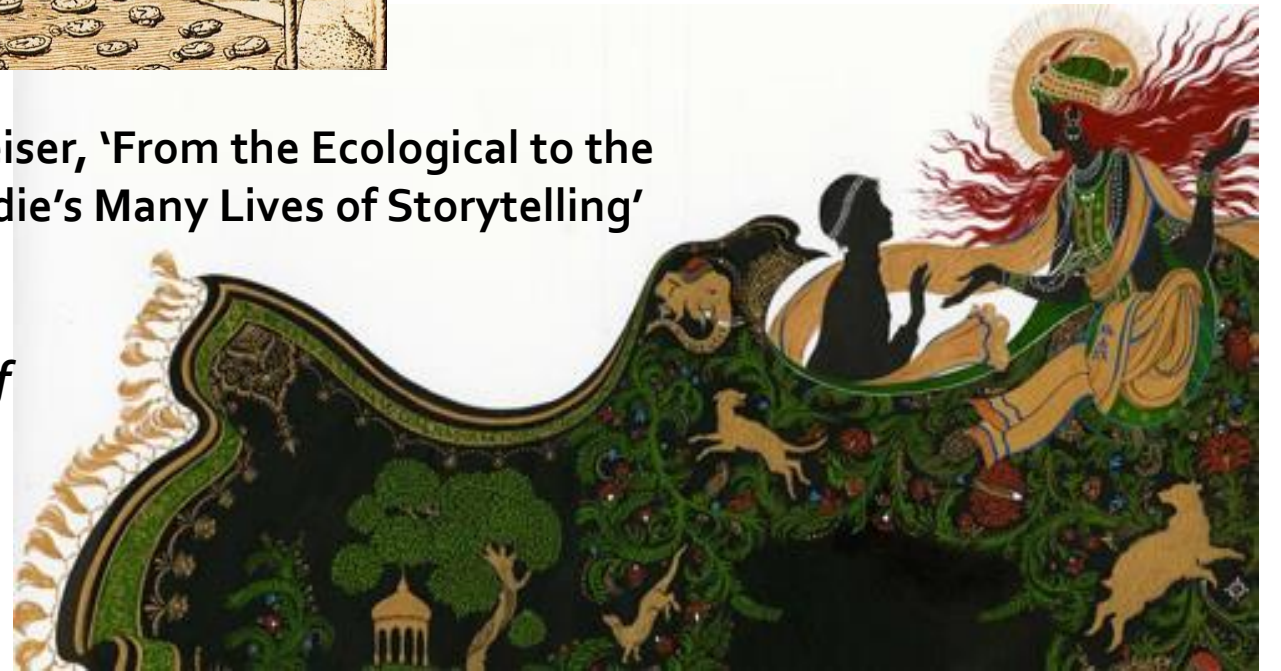


Chapter 14: Maria Luisa Alonso,
'Michael Ende's Philosophy of
Death, Life, and Time'

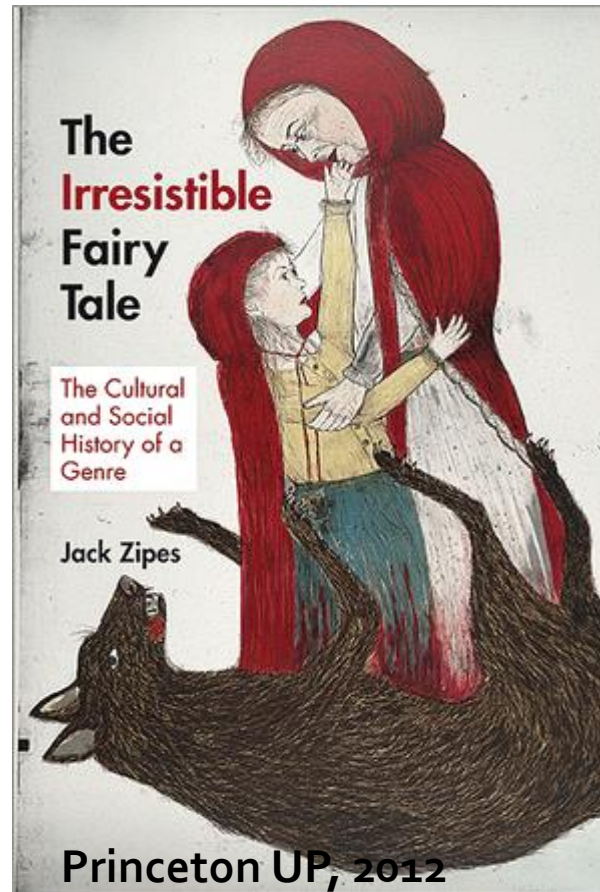
← Michael Ende's *Momo* (1973) and
Die unendliche Geschichte [*The
Neverending Story*] (1979)

Chapter 15: Frans Weiser, 'From the Ecological to the
Digital: Salman Rushdie's Many Lives of Storytelling'

Salman Rushdie's
*Haroun and the Sea of
Stories* (1990) and
*Luka and the Fire of
Life* (2010) →

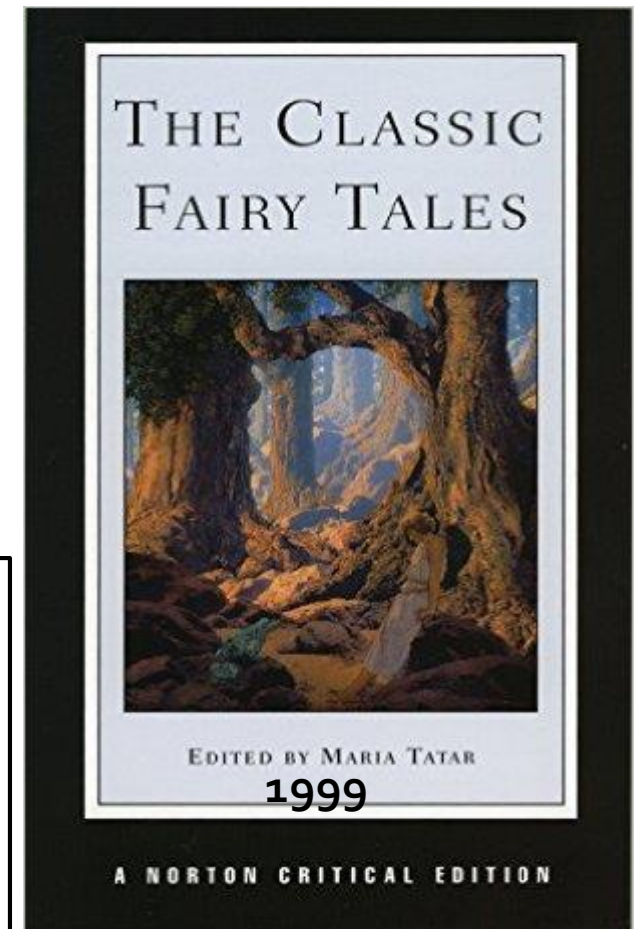


FAIRY TALES



← 'The historical evolution of storytelling reflects struggles of human beings worldwide to adapt to their changing natural and social environments' (Zipes).

Being 'derived largely from collective efforts, ... these stories circulate in multiple versions, reconfigured by each telling to form kaleidoscopic variations with distinctly different effects' (Tatar). →



Chapter 3

Margarita
Georgieva,

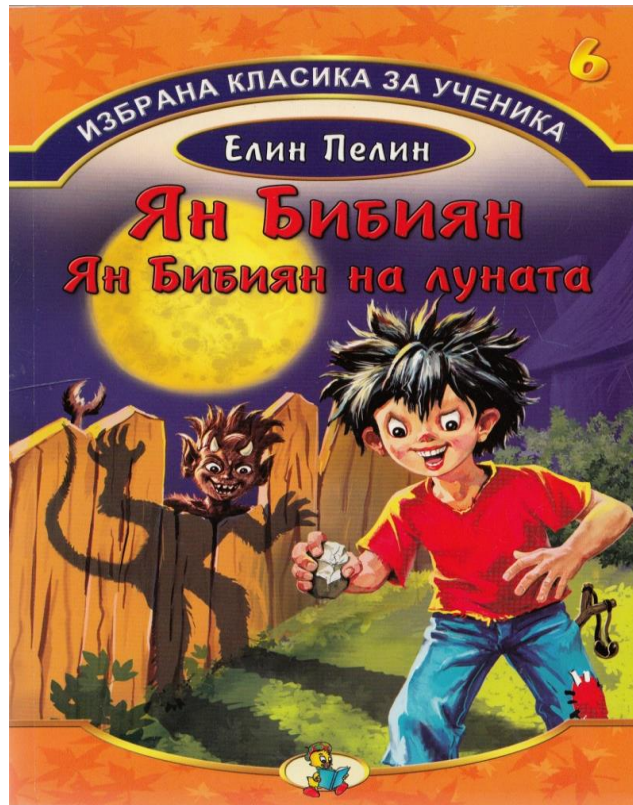
A Deathly
Underworld:
Bulgarian
Literature for
Children of the
Early Twentieth
Century



Elin Pelin, *Yan Bibiyan: The Incredible Adventures of a Kid* (1933)

&

Nikolai Rainov, 'Kingdom of the Samodivas,' *Bulgarian Tales* (1933)



↖ Illustrations for Rainov's *Samodivsko tsarstvo* by Mira Yovcheva bochoart.com

Politicizing Death

- Chapter 7: Urvi Mukhopadhyay, *From Ultimate Punishment to Heroic Sacrifice, and After: Representations of Death in Bengali Children's Literature from the Colonial Era*
- Chapter 8: Julie K. deGraffenried, *A New Normal: Death and Dying in a Soviet Children's Magazine, 1941-1945*
- Chapter 9: Susana S. Martínez, *Contemporary Coming of Age(ncy): Narratives of Political Violence and Death in El Salvador and Guatemala: 'So that future generations may be aware'*

Chapter 7

Urvi Mukhopadhyay,

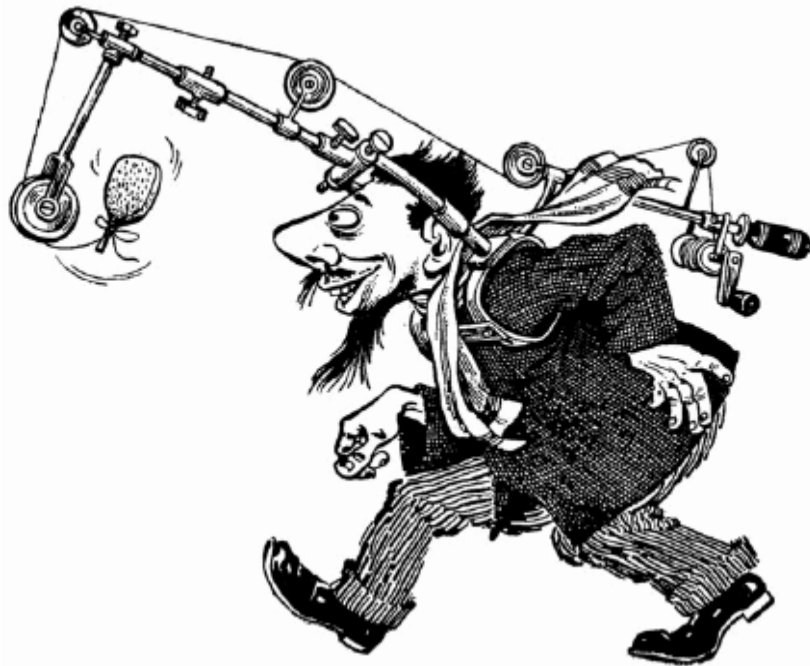
From Ultimate
Punishment to Heroic
Sacrifice, and After:
Representations of
Death in Bengali
Children's Literature
from the Colonial Era



← Iswarchandra
Vidyasagar's
Varnaparichay
[*Introduction to
the Alphabet*]
(1855)

Stories
by
Ray
Choudhury
&
Sukumar Ray

Ray Choudhury,
'Sheyal Pandit'
['The Scholarly Fox']
(1910) →

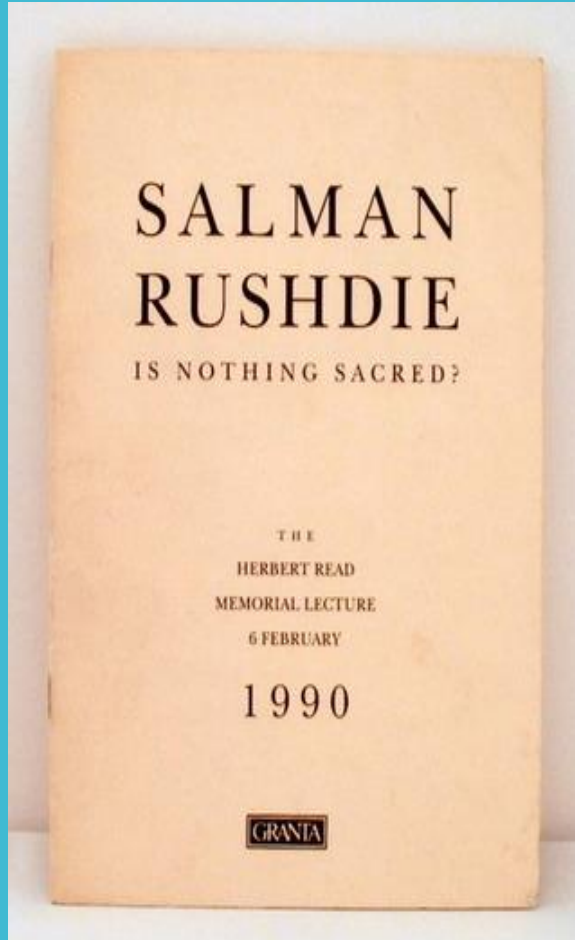


Satiric images by
Sukumar Ray from ↗
the 1920s



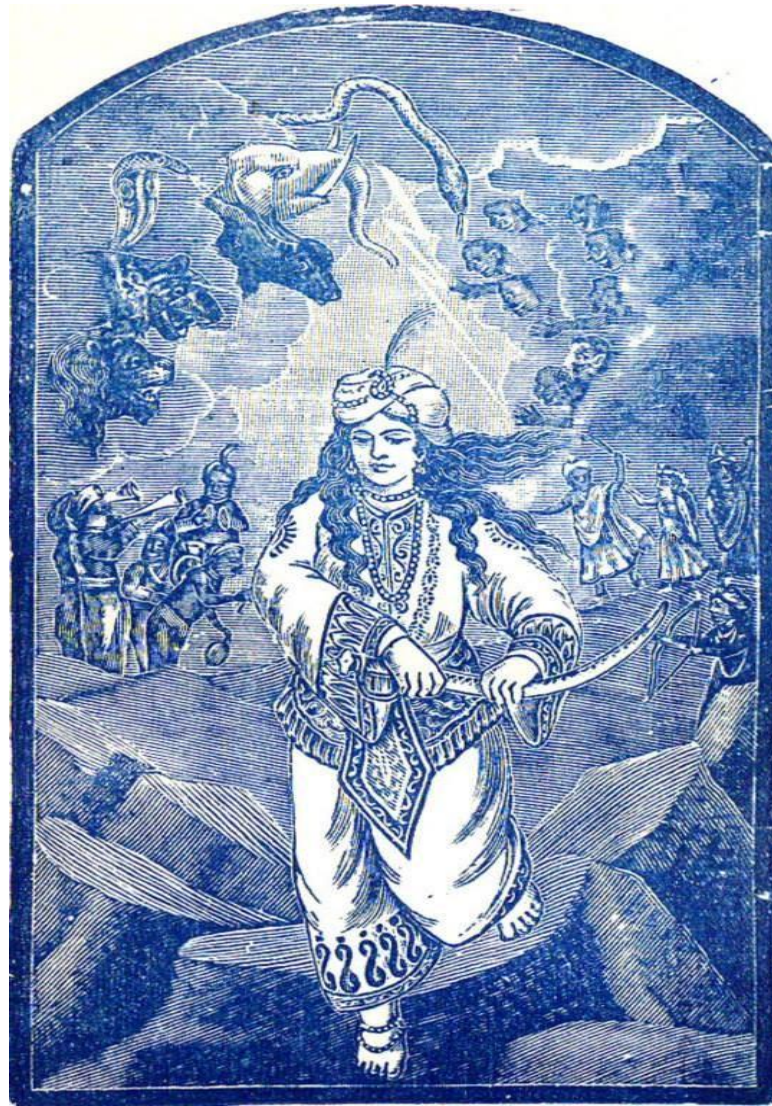
The sacred 'must always be subject to questioning, deconstruction, even to declarations of their obsolescence. To respect the sacred is to be paralysed by it' (Rushdie).

'Ironically, however, seventy years later, with female foeticide and child abuse still rampant, the connection between death and children in Bengali culture is as relevant now as it was one hundred and two hundred years ago. It is time for Bengali children's literature to enter the fray in ways that reflect social realities – or, in the spirit of Sukumar Ray, to debunk them' (Mukhopadhyay).



THEME #3

NEGOTIATION
OF THE
CONUNDRUM
THAT DEATH
CAN NEVER BE
SEEN AND
HENCE NEVER
REPRESENTED



Woodcut illustration, Mitra
Majumdar's *Thakurmar Jhuli*
[*Grandma's Bag of Tales*]
(1907)



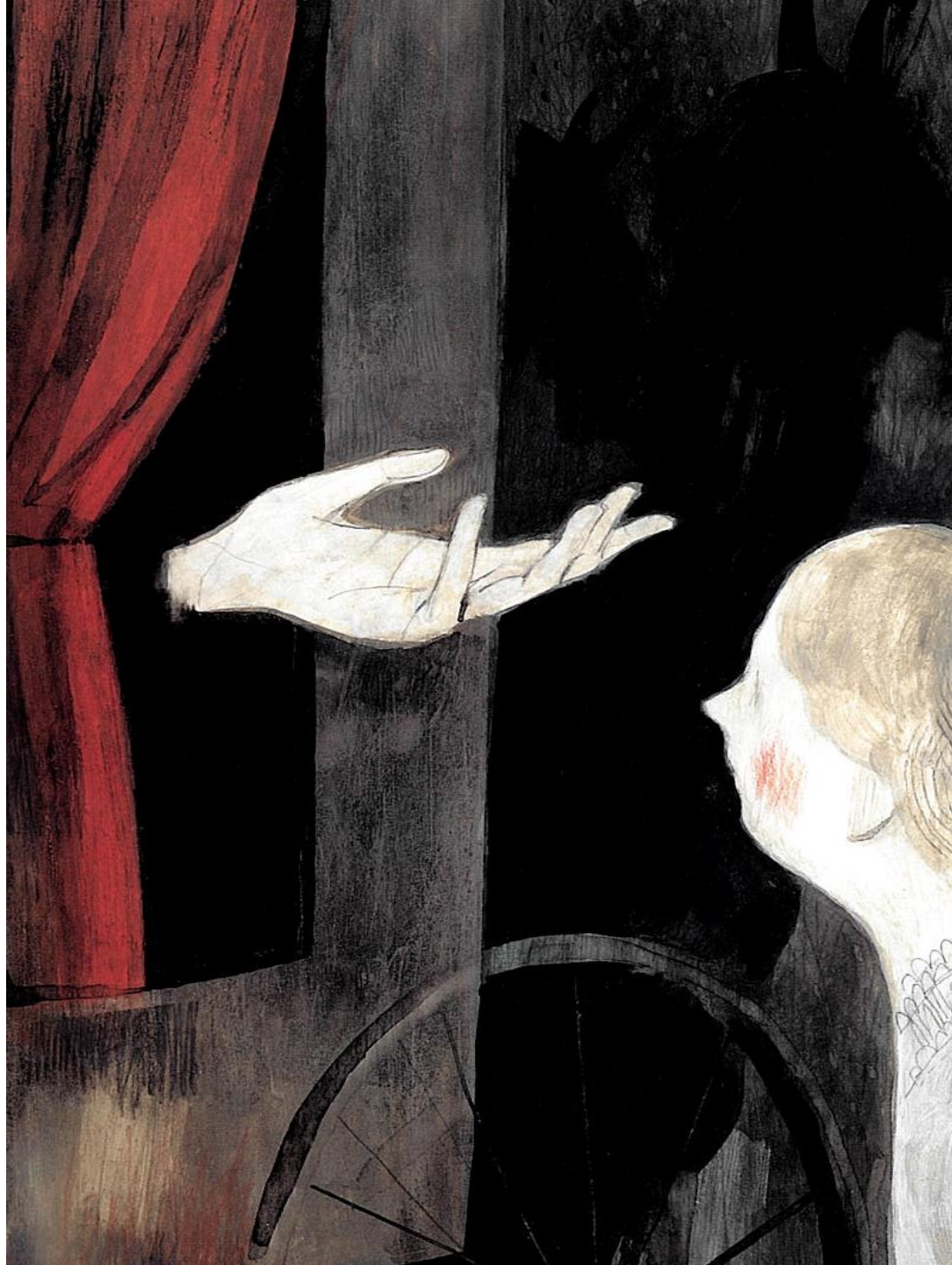
Maya Glyphs



Chapter 10

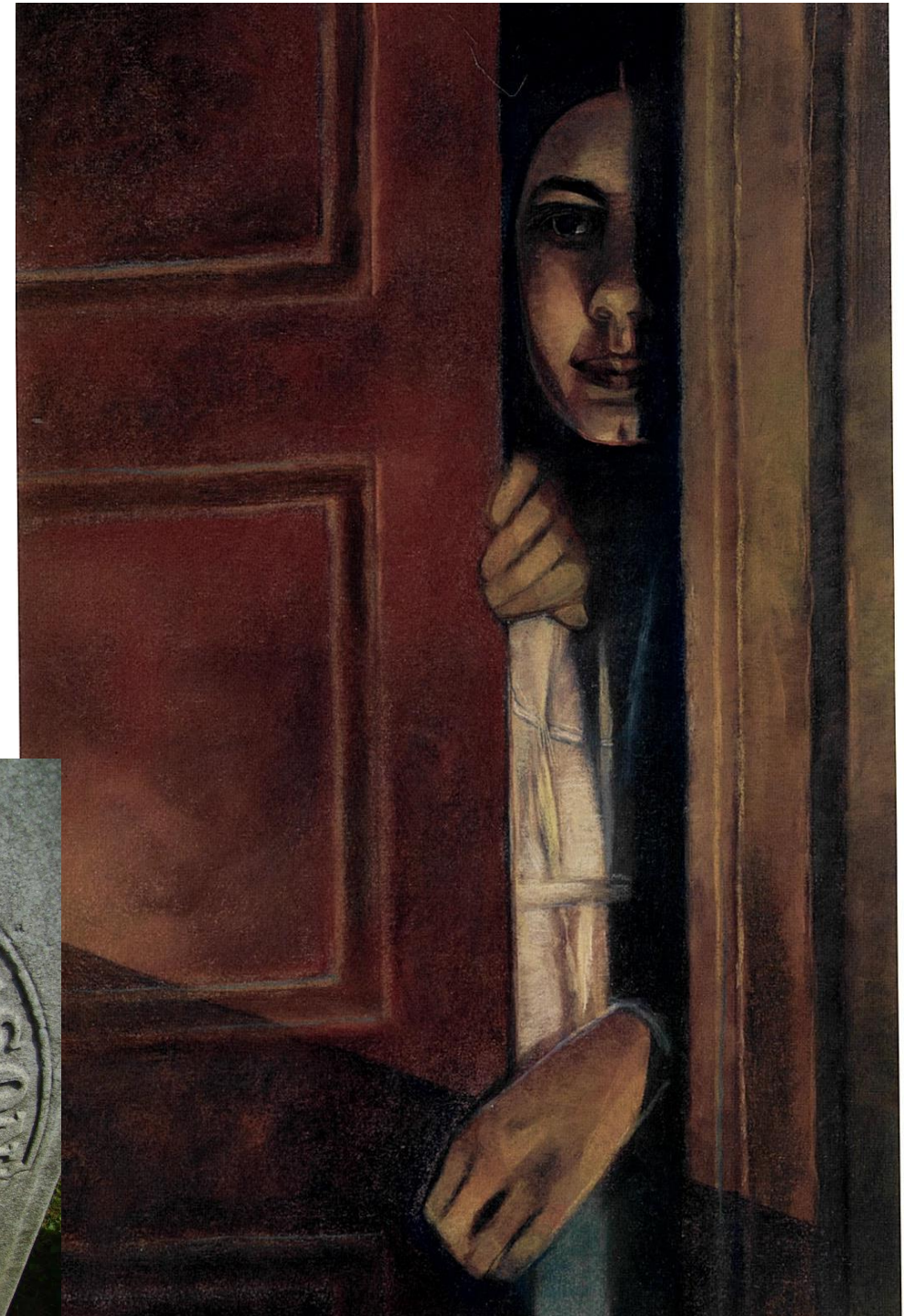
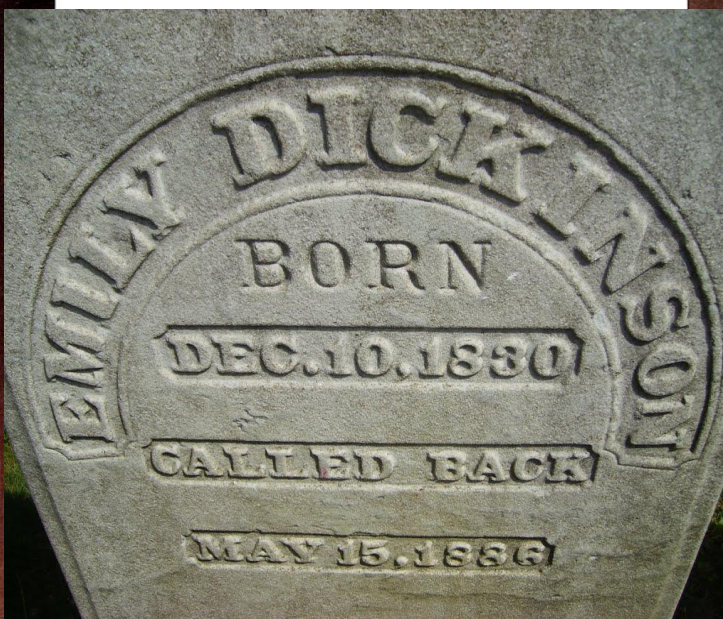
Lesley D. Clement,

The Last Resort:
Death and
Liminality in
Children's Picture
Books on Emily
Dickinson



Emily Dickinson,
'Because I could not
stop for Death – / He
kindly stopped for me'
(illustrated by Isabelle
Arsenault, *My Letter
to the World and Other
Poems*, KCP Poetry,
2008)

Illustrations
by
Gary Kelley
in
Jane Yolen's
*The Emily Sonnets:
The Life of Emily
Dickinson* (Creative
Editions, 2012)



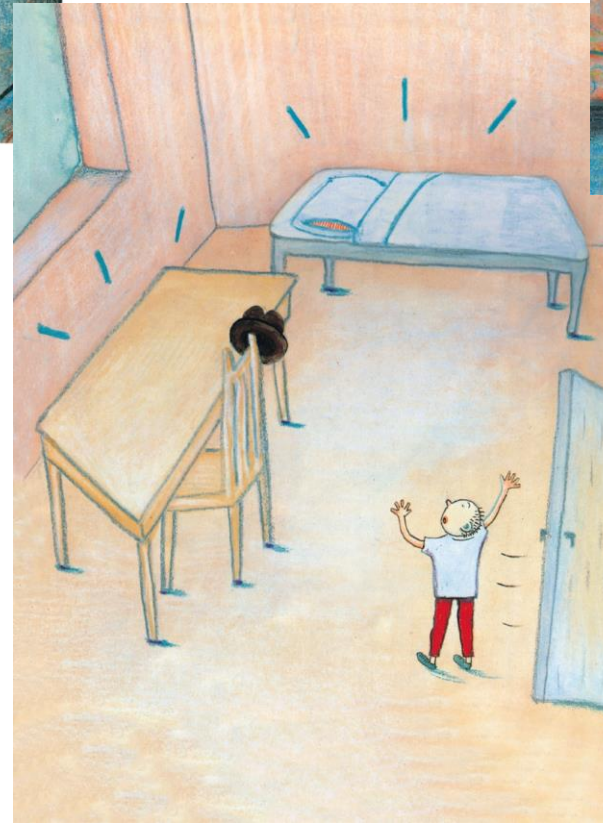
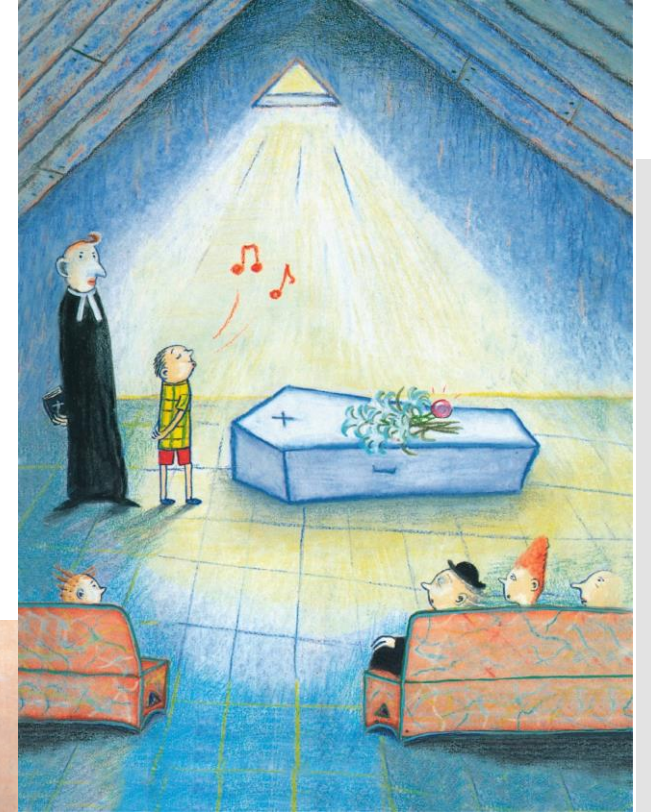
Chapter 11

Penni Cotton,

Old Age and Death in
Northern European
Picture Books:
Achieving Empathy
through Textual and
Filmic Images of
Sweden's *Kan du
Vissla Johanna*

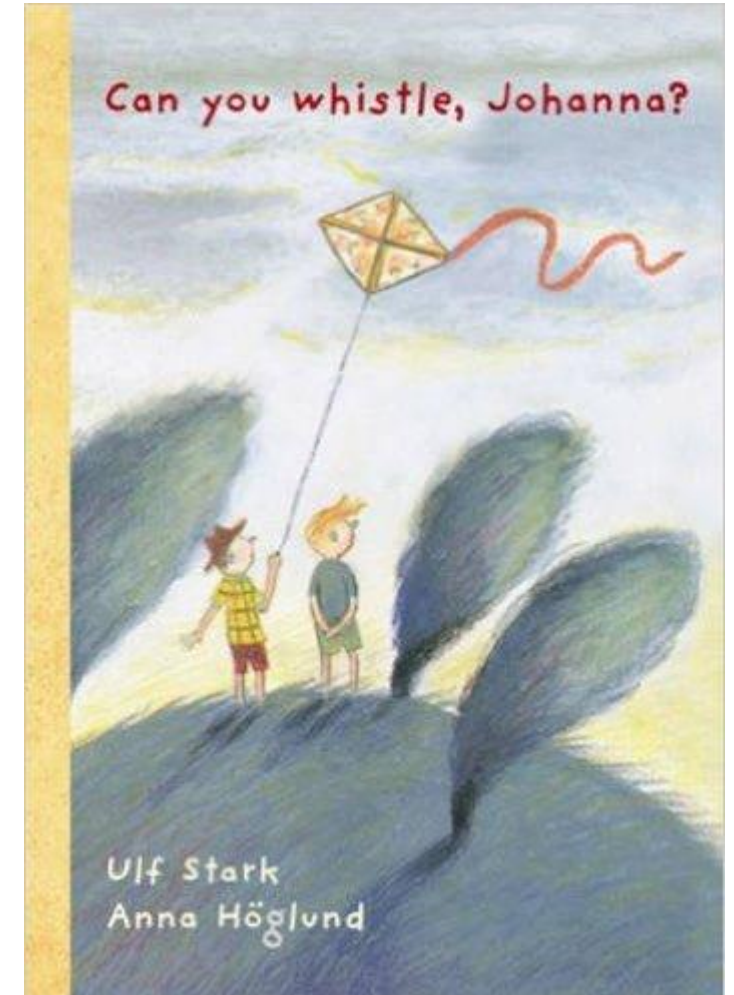


Illustrations by
Anna Höglund
in Ulf Stark's
*Can You
Whistle,
Johanna?*
(1992; Gecko
Press, 2005)



Physical Artifact → Concrete Memory

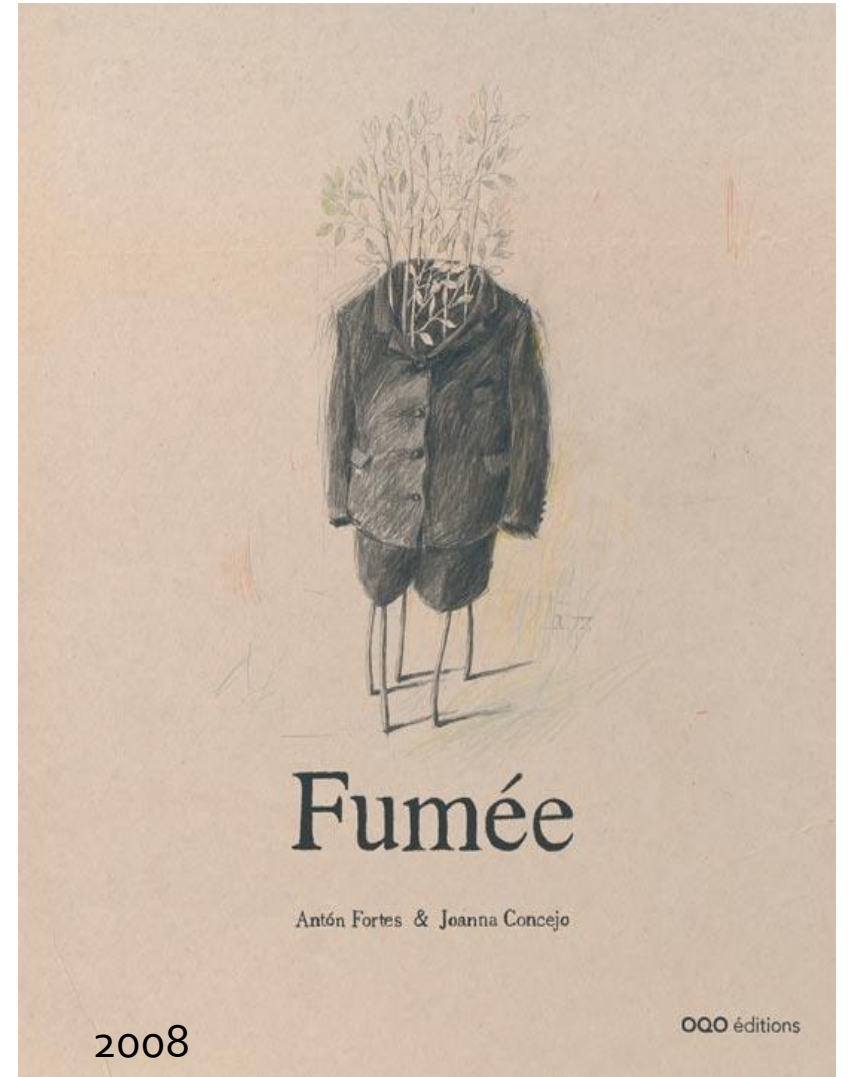
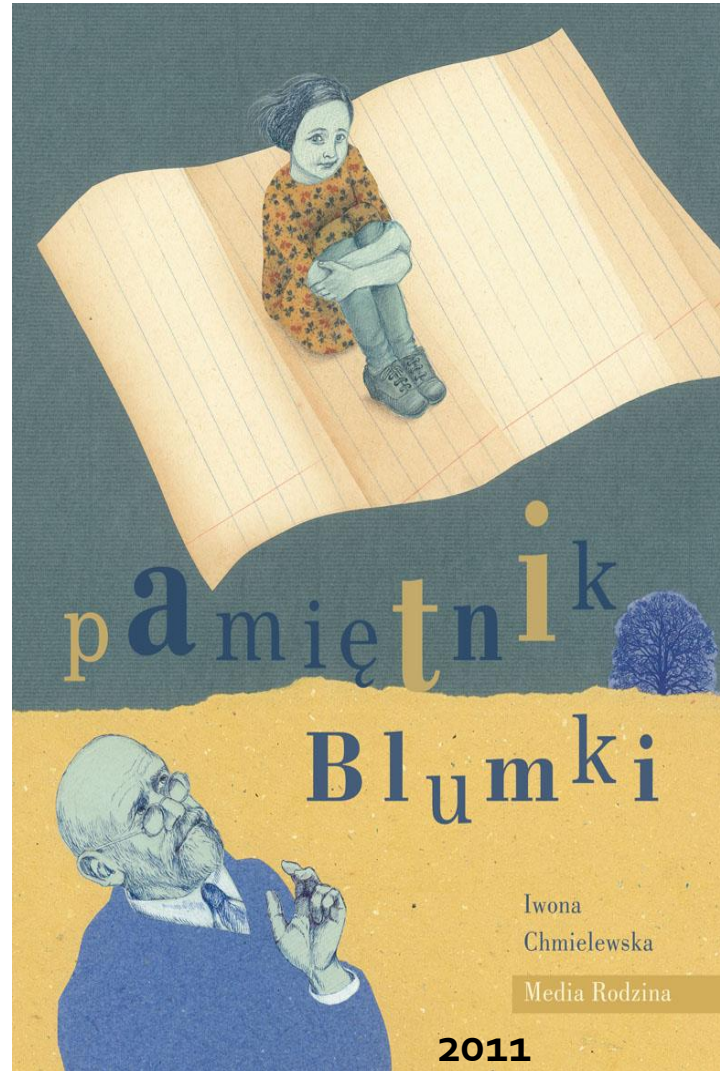
(Elisabeth Kübler-Ross,
On Grief and Grieving,
Simon & Schuster, 2005)



Chapter 12

Magdalena Sikorska
& Katarzyna
Smyczyńska

Visual Narratives of
Death and Memory:
The Holocaust in Two
Contemporary
European Picture
Books



THEME #4

**WHAT DEATH
REPRESENTS
METAPHORICALLY**



Kite Boy, from the studio
of Stasia Burrington
stasiaburrington.com

Because 'death cannot be represented ... the analysis of it must show not only how it claims to represent death, but also what else it in fact represents, however suppressed: assertion of alternative power, self-referential metaphor, aggression against individuals or groups, formation of group identities and ideologies, and so forth' (Elisabeth Bronfen and Sarah Goodwin, introduction to *Death and Representation*, Johns Hopkins UP, 1993).

Chapter 4

Hossein Sheykh Rezaee, with other members of the research group of the Children's Book Council of Iran,

Holy Death:
Constructions of Martyrdom in Persian Children's Literature on the Eight-Year War between Iraq and Iran

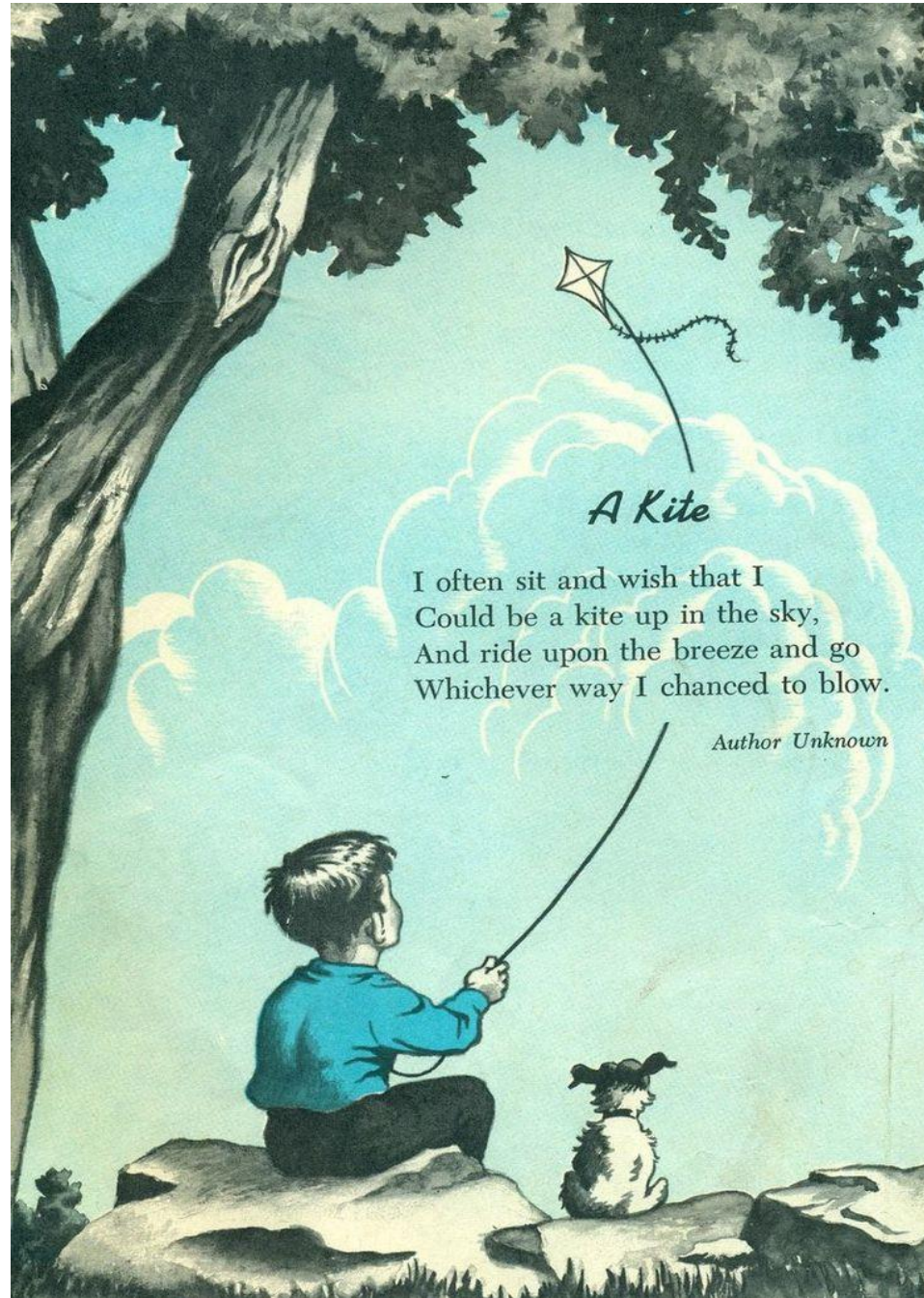


Samad Behrangi, *Maahi siyaah-e kuchulu* [*The Little Black Fish*] (1968)

'The symbolic universes used to legitimate martyrdom have become increasingly sophisticated'; 'some writers have tried to confront their readers with death as an unpleasant phenomenon' (Rezaee et al.).

THEME #5

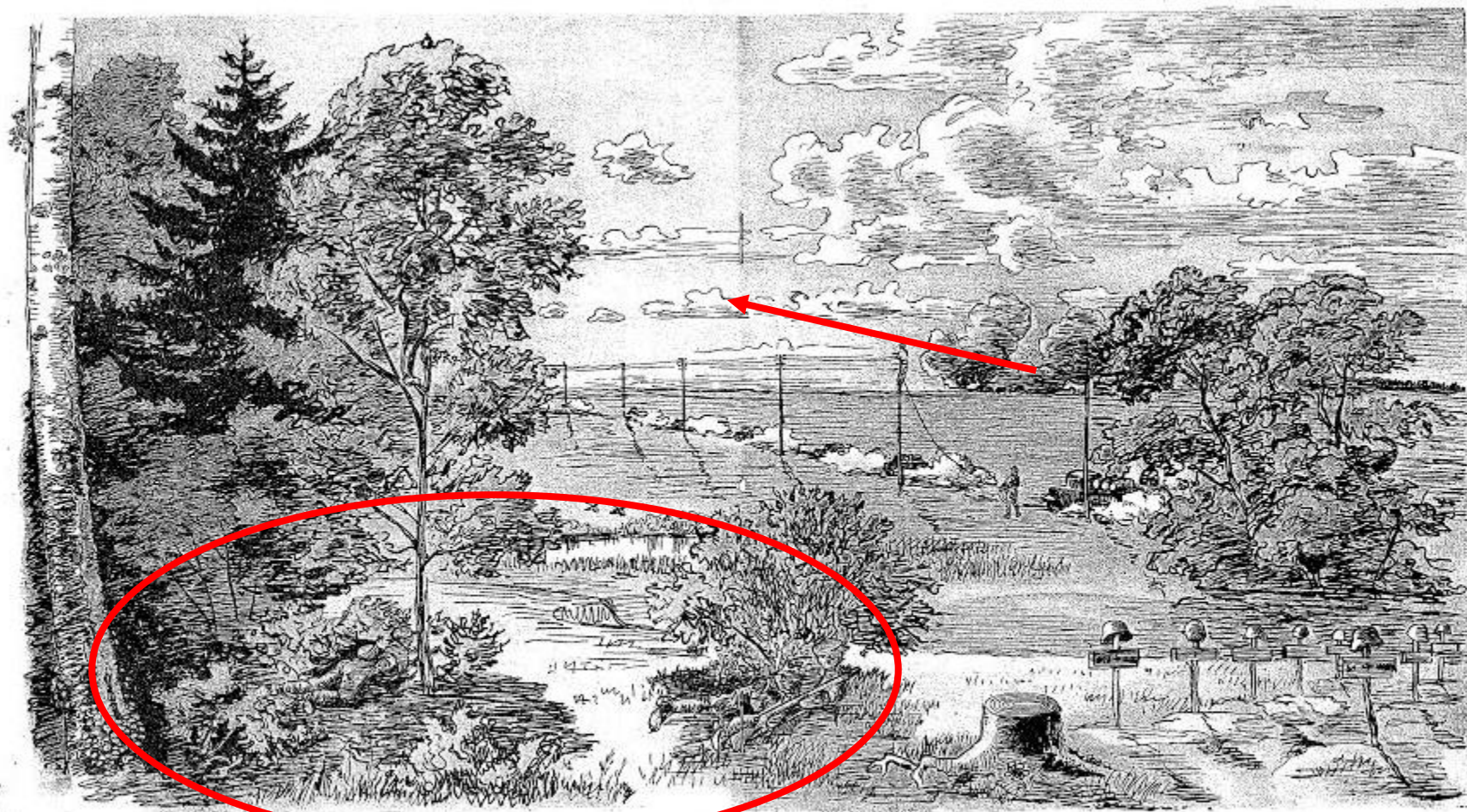
ACTIVE ROLE
THAT CHILDREN
CAN PLAY & ARE
ENCOURAGED TO
PLAY IN
FRAMING THEIR
OWN
PERCEPTIONS OF
& RESPONSES TO
DEATH



Chapter 8

Julie
deGraffenried,

A New Normal:
Death and Dying
in a Soviet
Children's
Magazine,
1941-1945



В разведке

Рис. А. Шашова

Ребята, напишите нам, что здесь нарисовано. Зачем здесь находятся партизаны? Кто из партизан замас-

кировался правильно и кто неправильно и почему? Какие машины идут по дороге? В какую сторону идет ко-

лонна — на север, юг, восток или запад? В какое время дня происходят события? Что делает враг — отсту-

пает или наступает? Что можно здесь использовать для еды? Можно ли здесь напиться?

10

11

Double-spread illustration by A. Shishov,
'V razvedke' ['On Reconnaissance'], *Murzilka* (July 1942)

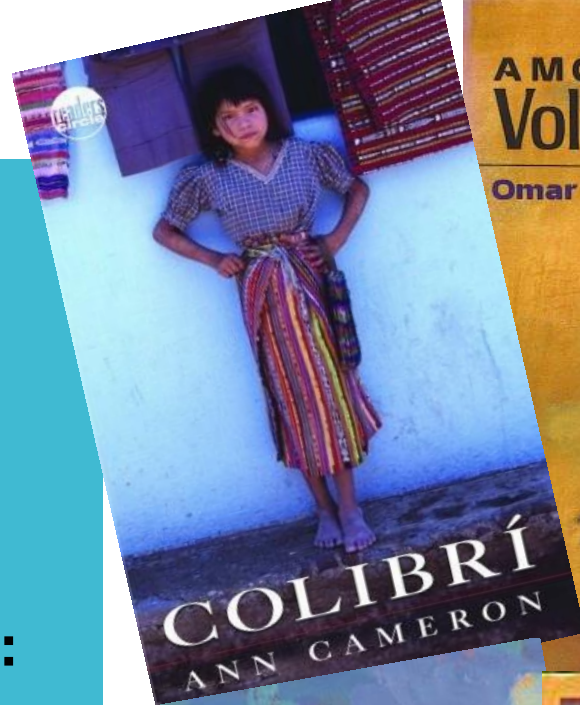
'In the latter years of the war, gaps in the messages about war, death, and dying appeared, allowing the child reader ample opportunity to manipulate messages conveyed by conflicting images and texts for personal purposes' (deGraffenried).



Chapter 9

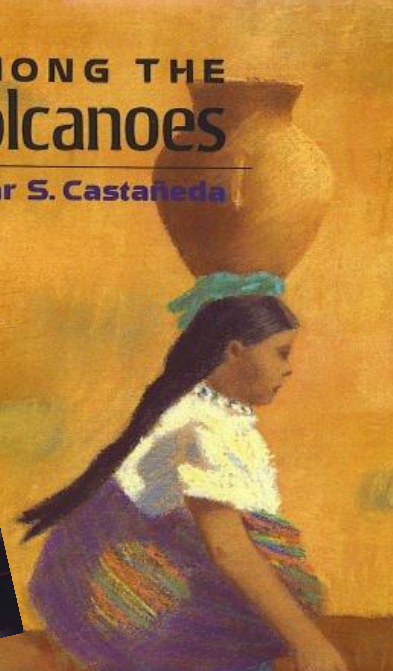
Susana Martínez,

Contemporary
Coming of Age(ncy):
Narratives of
Political Violence and
Death in El Salvador
and Guatemala,
'So that future
generations may be
aware'



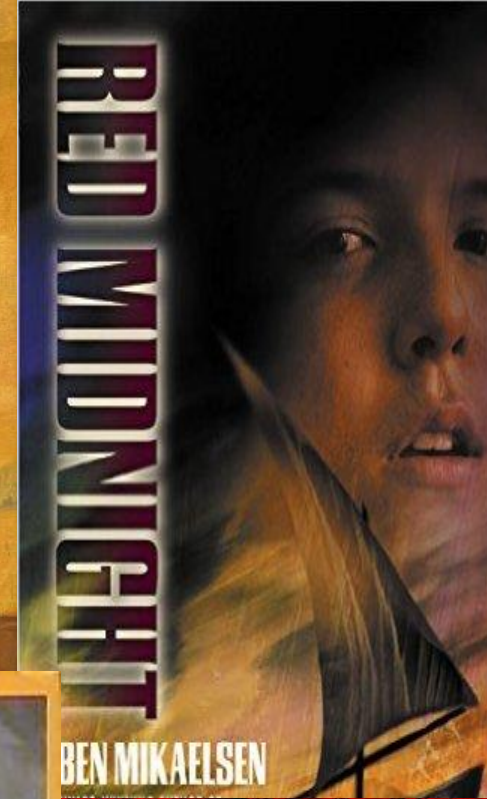
AMONG THE
Volcanoes

Omar S. Castañeda



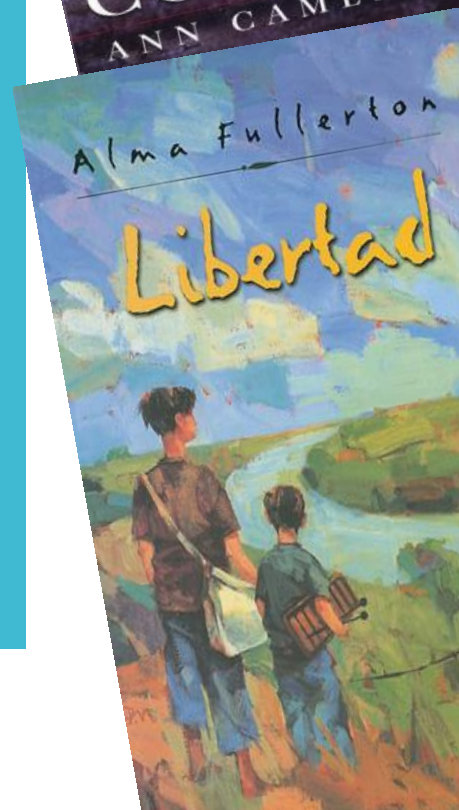
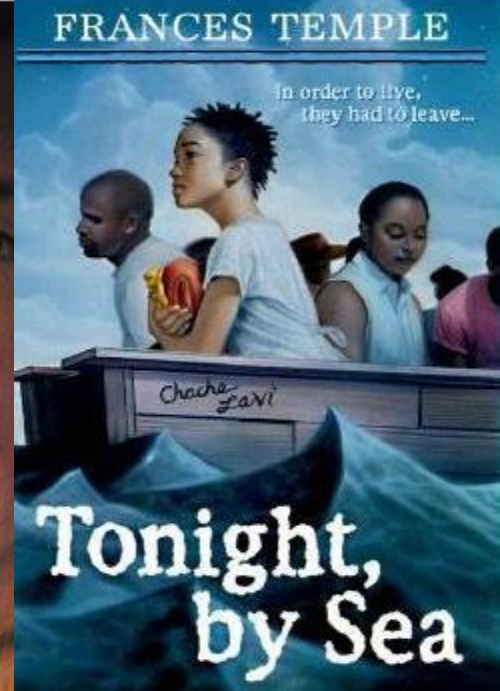
RED
MIDNIGHT

BEN MIKAELSEN

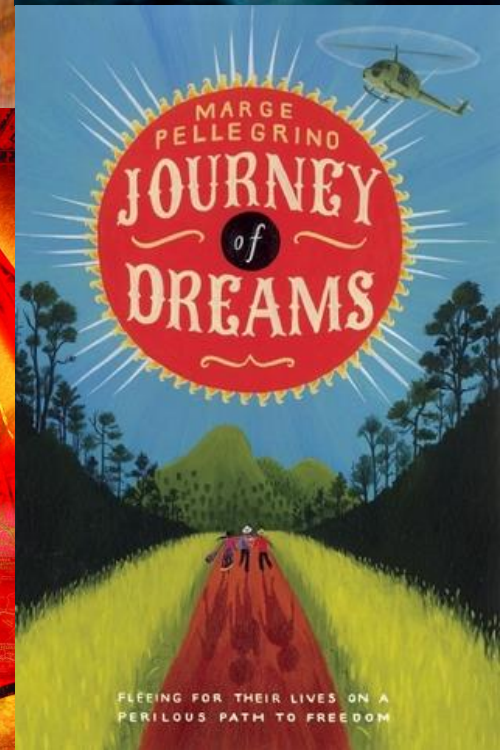
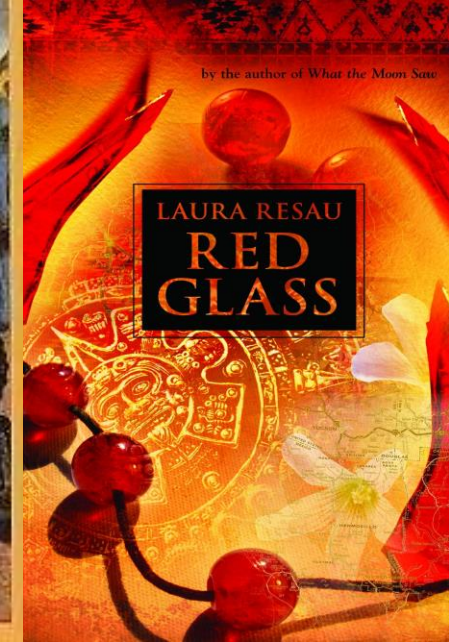
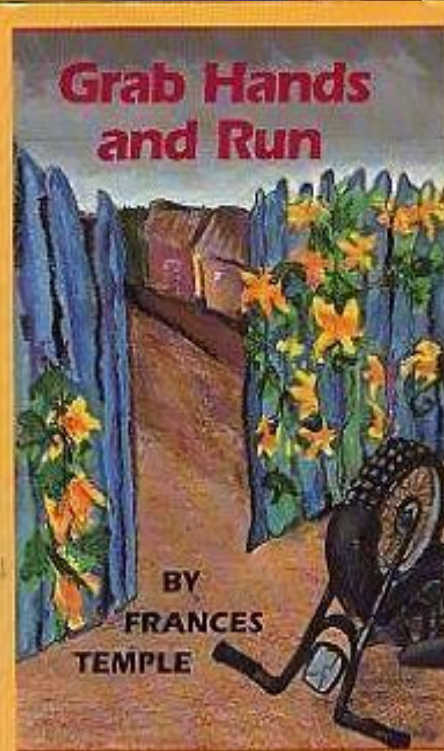


FRANCES TEMPLE

In order to live,
they had to leave...



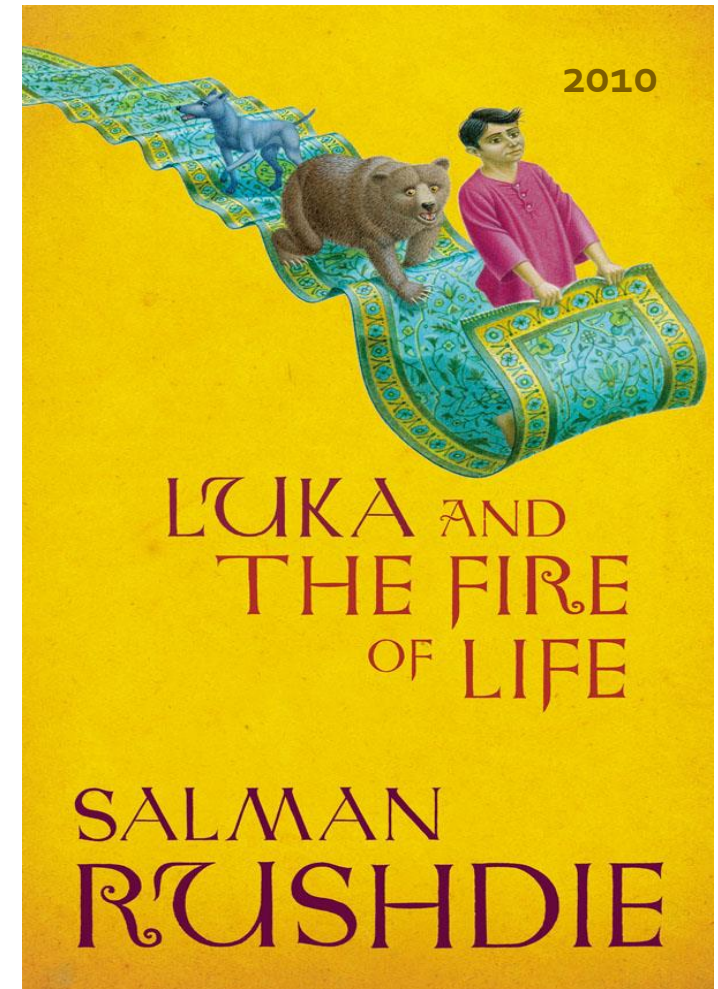
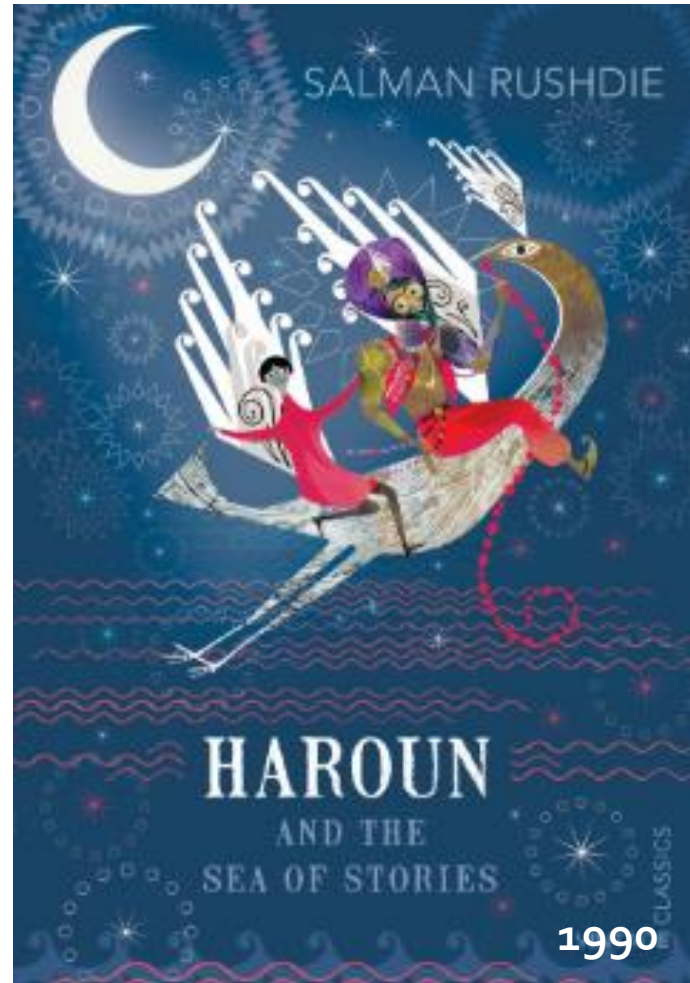
Grab Hands
and Run



Chapter 15

Frans Weiser,

**From the
Ecological to the
Digital:
Salman Rushdie's
Many Lives of
Storytelling**

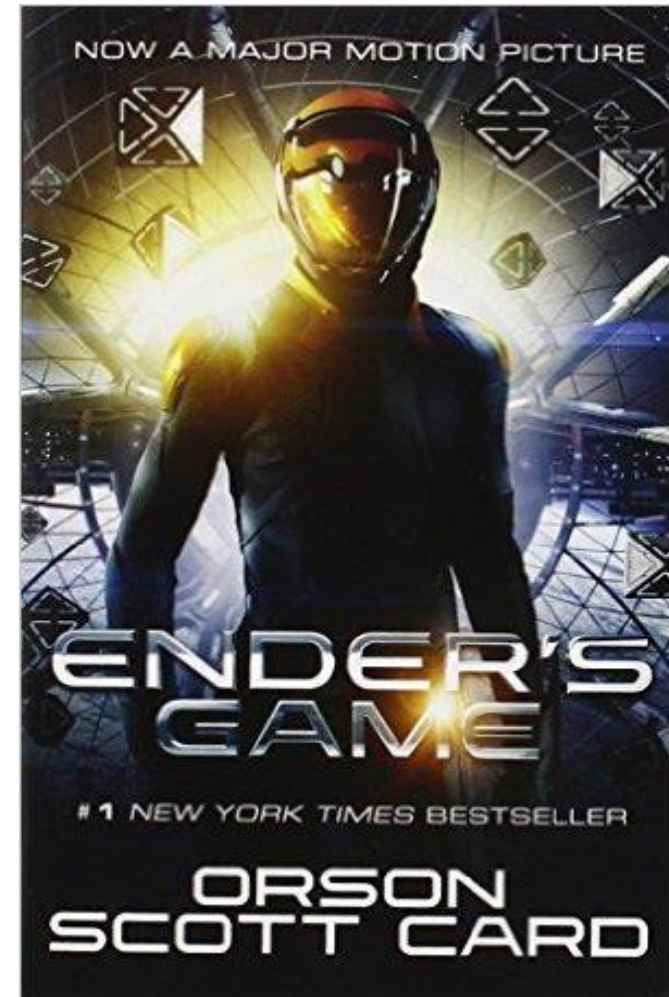
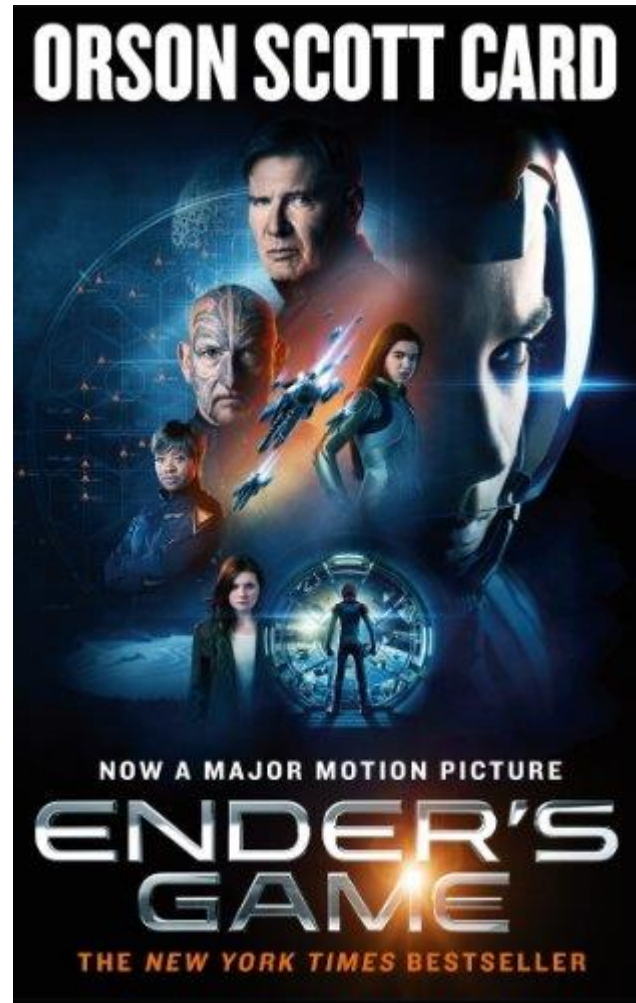


'Thus this new form of interaction provides a platform for storytelling to augment continually its multiple lives' (Weiser).

Chapter 17

Susan Shau
Ming Tan,

Battling School:
Death as
Education in
Ender's Game

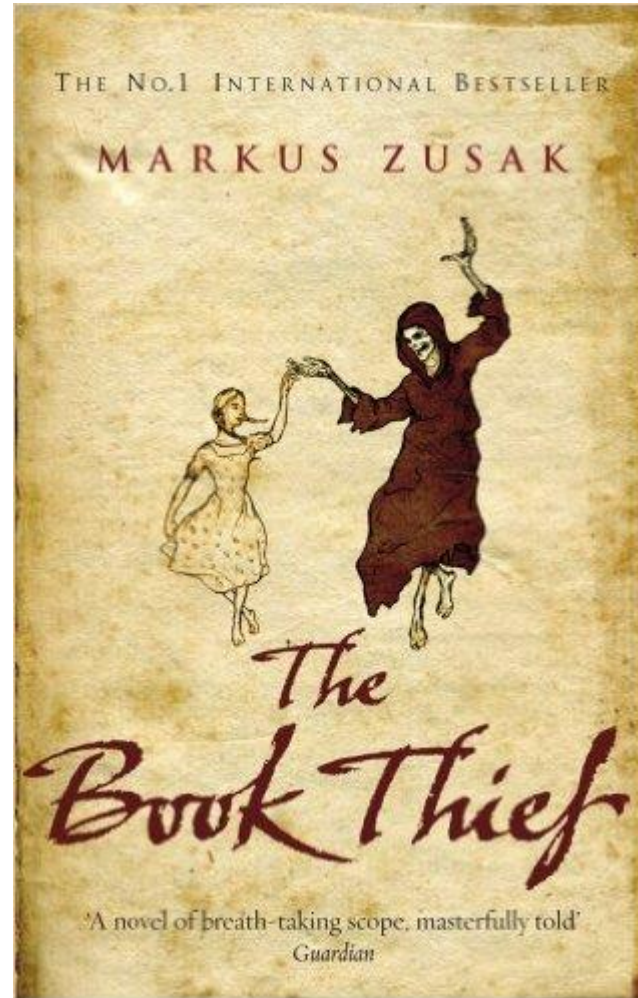


'This death is made possible – and, in fact, is delivered – through child's play' (Tan).

Chapter 18

Markus P.J.
Bohlmann,

Machinic
Liaisons:
Death's Dance
with Children in
Markus Zusak's
The Book Thief



6000 Palestinian children in northern Gaza attempting to break world record in UN-sponsored event (*The Telegraph*)

THEME #6

**LITERATURE
INCORPORATING
DEATH
ENHANCES
CHILDREN'S
SENSE OF
COMMUNITY –
PAST, PRESENT,
& FUTURE**



Chapter 16

Rosana Kohl
Bines,

Mocking Death
in Brazilian
Children's Folk
Literature

'The experience of consensual death becomes, paradoxically, a testimony to childhood's vital, resilient force that remains unaltered in the presence of destruction. In their playful unconcern regarding the worst and in their blunt mockery of death, children do not avoid or reject death but, conversely, incorporate it in the course of life itself, as something that simply occurs at the end of each stanza. Life and death are not antagonists after all, but neighboring dimensions that can suddenly come into contact through a coincidence of sounds. That nothing more than a rhyme might be enough to bring life and death together is the powerful truth that children whisper to us through the *Tangolomango*' (Bines).



CONCLUSION



Children fly kites at a cemetery, against backdrop of the *Volcan del Agua* [Water Volcano], during the Day of the Dead celebrations in Santa Maria de Jesus, Guatemala www.dailymail.co.uk

THE 3R'S
RESOURCEFULNESS
RESILIENCE
RESISTANCE



Tangled, from the studio
of Stasia Burrington
stasiaburrington.com