



Children's Literature: Some Marxist Perspectives

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This is a record of the first children's literature conference at the University of Hertfordshire, which took place in April 2006. The conference was a mix of academic papers and presentations by writers, including Beverley Naidoo, Conor Kostick and Rhiannon Lassiter. Engagingly, in contrast to the usual starchy conference proceedings, it is well illustrated, not only with illustrations from the works discussed but with snapshots of the participants enjoying their day. The twelve contributions show an eclectic understanding of what might be Marxist perspectives, including a science fiction symposium led by Farah Mendelson, Pat Pinsent's examination of the relationship of Catholicism and class consciousness, David Rudd on Bill Naughton, Richard MacSween's response to the Burnley riots in 2001, and an entertaining treatment of **Farmer Duck** by Victoria de Rijke. The main threads running through the conference were the relationship of literature to social reality, especially as a carrier of ideology, and the part that literature plays in change in the real world. Both these are fascinatingly worked in Michael Rosen's introduction, which is the longest and most ambitious of the contributions. Despite his efforts, the reader may come away from the book, as I did from the day itself, still puzzled as to what a Marxist view of children's literature might be. Perhaps it's the beginning of a longer discussion. Rosen convened a second conference on the same subject in June this year, while the University of Hertfordshire had already moved on at their second conference in April to discuss the contribution of psychoanalytic theory to children's literature.

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