

reader to become an “animal tracker,” and search for the often elusive clues these animals leave behind. This is a great concept, but unfortunately it isn’t carried through. Most of the descriptions of the animals do not indicate in which part of North America they are to be found. A map showing the geographical distribution of the animal seems an obvious piece of information and yet it is lacking. One can imagine the disappointment of a child on Canada’s east coast out looking for prairie dogs, magpies and pronghorns. There seems to be a slant towards focusing on western species, but this is never made explicit.

A “footprint” of each species is given if feasible, but it is not drawn to scale, although this is not mentioned. Likewise with the eggs of birds, there is no mention of size.

Each book contains a very brief index and a not very helpful glossary. One is left with the impression that the series, while attractive, is lacking in serious research and attention to detail.

Marilynn Rudi is a librarian with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, in St. Andrews, New Brunswick.

Destroying the Plot

Struwwelpeter Tales of Hoffmann. Trans. Seanair. Iolair Publishing, 1996. 64 pp. \$19.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-099-5.

There are only a few German books which are recognized as worldwide children’s classics — one of them is Heinrich Hoffmann’s picture book *Struwwelpeter*.

In 1844, H. Hoffmann, a former medical doctor, became a children’s book author. When, just around Christmas, he started to look for a present for his son and couldn’t find anything he bought a little empty booklet and started to write and paint the verses and drawings which would later become so well-known. In 1845, when the book was published, a classic was born.

Hoffmann has succeeded in creating something of an archetype — his *Struwwelpeter* has something for everyone. He has been, at various times, forced into uniform as a *Militärstruwwelpeter*, or has metamorphosed into the German Emperor William II, “Swollen-headed William;” he has even changed into *Struwwel-Hitler*, and a little girl, *Struwwelotte*. Not long ago, *Struwwelpeter* got to be gay and at last, very successfully, became Anti-*Struwwelpeter*.

Very recently, Canada's Iolair Publishing has produced another variation — *Struwwelpetriade* — translated by Seanair and published as *Struwwelpeter Tales of Hoffmann*. From Seanair's long preface we learn:

My translations are not word for word translations. Instead, they try to give the exact original stories in modern English. It would be criminal to alter or try to 'improve' these classics: the words and surroundings are changed only slightly, just enough to bring the REAL stories to the late 20th century North American reader.

Well, let us examine whether he is right.

Seanair honours H. Hoffmann very much in that his stories generally leave things uncertain and undetermined. They are short and simple and invite the reader to follow the pictures. But Seanair also tends to make those things clear and evident which have been left open-ended by Hoffmann. His sequels to the stories result in there being only one meaning left. I must disagree with Seanair in this, because it is the power of Hoffmann's picture book that it offers only short moments without reference to anything that has happened either before or after the story is told.

Hoffmann shows dramatic episodes, and he reveals strong emotions — hate, anxiety, anger, violence, and loneliness. Seanair attempts to put "observed facts" in the place of those emotions. Seanair's ideas concerning the stories' endings tend to demonstrate "friendly possibilities (3). But by changing Hoffmann's tales in this way the drama and the grotesque get lost. For example, Seanair invites the reader to discuss whether the hunter has been drowned, and proposes that the reader accept that help arrived just in time to save the hunter's life. This attempt to suggest new endings to the stories and to change the settings in order to make them fit for twentieth-century North America seems to me a failure.

What Seanair seems to perceive as wrong in these stories in reality is not wrong at all; the "mistakes" are part of the power of the story: they affect our feelings and they attract our minds. H. Hoffmann's pictures and verses are not perfect, but they aren't boring either. Nevertheless, after a long life of many trials and tribulations, *Struwwelpeter* is still vital enough to survive even Seanair's attack.

Winfred Kaminski (Germany) received his PhD from Frankfurt University in 1975. He is a Professor of Literary- and Language-Education at the Fachhochschule Koeln. Among his publications are several books on children's literature, and in 1997 he published a study on fairy tales, "Vom Zauber der Märchen."