Writing the Pictures and Painting the Words

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I feel very honoured to be receiving this award, especially as it bears the name of one who represents all that is best in children's books. When I first heard the news, I was torn between great excitement and sheer terror at the thought of following such an illustrious line-up of recipients. What on earth could I talk about? It is not exactly easy to get earnest, meaningful and philosophical about a collection of doggerel and catterel, however serious one may be about one's work. I do feel however that this award is a recognition of the important part picture books have to play in the world of reading and I am delighted and proud to be the recipient for 1999.

Back in 1974, when Eve Sutton's and my book My *Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* was first published, a four-year-old friend was heard to say, 'I know the lady
who wrote the pictures.' I've decided to call today's talk *Writing the Pictures and Painting the Words*, which, when I begin to think about it, is a rather neat way of describing the dual process involved in being both writer and illustrator. Not only does it underline the nature of a really successful picture book, in which word and picture are inter-woven in a truly equal partnership, but it does I think show how the line between the two halves becomes blurred when one is producing the 'whole' book. I find that in planning the pictures, in choosing what aspects of the text to illustrate, making decisions on composition and detail, finding the style to suit the text, not to mention the endless lists of reminders, one is indeed 'writing the pictures.' In attempting to produce word and rhythm patterns, flow, texture, light and shade in the
text, it seems appropriate to say one is 'painting the words.'

I think it would be wise at this point to give you a little potted history as it will probably help to flesh out where I've come from and maybe shed some light on influences and directions.

I come from a long long line of Scots on both sides of my family. My father, who was bornin Glasgow and trained in forestry, came out to New Zealand

with a cousin in 1922, following in the footsteps of his great uncle John Kirkcaldie who had started a business in Wellington in the 1860s. Father and his cousin intended to develop an orchard in Central Otago but no sooner was it established than the Depression hit, they had to walk off their land and Father went back to forestry. By this time he had met and married my mother who was a city girl from Dunedin, but brave enough - or unsuspecting enough - to face happily the prospect of life among the pine trees in the backblocks.

My maternal grandfather was born in Dunedin of Scottish parents and as a young man worked his passage 'home' to Scotland. He decided his Scottish relatives spent far too much time in kirk, met and married my grandmother in Glasgow and brought her out to New Zealand in 1902. My grandfather was as bald as a billiard ball, had a sharply pointed waxed moustache and was fond of practical jokes. My grandmother, a gentle, kind and thoughtful soul, would be exasperatedly amused by his antics. My mother's brother, their only son, was shot down over Germany in 1943. He was posted missing at the time, but it was not until 1949 that the family knew what had happened. Both grandparents died shortly afterwards; perhaps it was coincidental, perhaps not.

By the time I was born in 1941, my parents were living briefly in 'civilization', in Rotorua. After that, it was off to the Kaingaroa Forest for the next seventeen years.

I have written elsewhere that my childhood was governed by isolation, pine trees and pumice dust and that memories of that time are coloured by the early awareness of the contrast between the big wild empty outdoors and our cosy little family cocoon in the middle of it. It was a close threesome – I was an only child and I guess as a result of that, even more focussed on the relationship with my parents. An only but not a lonely child though – my parents saw to that.

When I was six my father was appointed Officer in Charge of the southern end of Kaingaroa Forest and we moved to a spot - not much more than a clearing in the trees - on the Napier-Taupo Road. It had several names; Iwitahi, Waimihia and 60/8 (‚Sixty Bar Eight') which was its early land run designation. The settlement consisted of four houses, a one-room sole

charge school and, a mile down the road, a single men's camp for forestry workers. It was a metropolis to me though and even better, there were other children. However, as most families tended to be itinerant, I was the only constant factor over the eleven years we lived there and I rarely had a friend of my own age. We had to make do with what we had.

There was no entertainment and we had to rely entirely on our own resources. I don't remember ever being bored; we played in the trees, up the trees, we used them as lookouts for volcano watching and we made pine needle houses. (A thought here: do children still *climb* trees?)

Although we were only sixteen miles from Taupo, the main road in the forties was narrow, winding and dusty. Few folk had cars and the landscape was empty in all directions - where the pines ended the tussock and scrub began - and the feeling of being miles from anywhere was real. Bleak probably to a grown-up but to children, who make magic out of the most unlikely places, it had its charms.

1 must tell you about the uncanny experience I had just days ago. I was immersed in writing this, wallowing in nostalgia as I revisited childhood, when the phone rang. It was a voice from those days, someone who touched base with it all. Her large family had lived at Iwitahi at the same time, she went to the little school with me and I had neither seen nor heard of her from those days until now, 47 years later. She had seen an article about me in a magazine at the doctor's that morning, realised who I was and tracked me down, eager for a chat. 'Do you remember that earthquake?' she asked, and away we went. With no brothers and sisters to back me up and with both parents gone now, I am becoming aware that as there is nobody around to corroborate my stories of those times, am I remembering facts as they were or am I reinventing the past? It was a timely and welcome call.

Iwitahi School was a fairly Spartan affair, with only the bare essentials and the old fashioned two-seater desks ranging from infants at one end of the room to Form 2 at the other. We had one small bookshelf - the only permanent books 1 remember on it, apart from our *Progressive Readers,* were called *Romany Readers.* They were wildlife studies of animals like badgers, hedgehogs and hares. (1 remember learning the name 'leveret' for a

baby hare from these.) The books had me hooked on natural history from a very early age.

Into this relative book desert (by today's standards) would come, like manna from heaven, the School Library Service box of books. They arrived every three months, a long awaited treasure chest of Seuss, Mary Plain, fairy tales and folk tales and fables from around the word, Canadian and African stories, animal stories - in fact everything one could possibly wish for, all to be savoured and re-read long before the next box was due. I can still feel the excitement there was when it arrived and we had the Grand Opening.

There was the *School Journal* of course - I remember Russell Clark's illustrations and the story of *Miss Smiley and her* 73 *Cats.* (She drove, I think, a Model T Ford and if my memory serves me right, all 73 cats went along for the ride.)

The *Progressive Readers* made learning to read memorable. I remember meeting *The Lion and the Mouse* and Mr *Nobody,* there was a weird story about planting cats tail-up in the garden which I didn't like at all, and best of all, the story about the Motmot Bird. I've never set eyes on the readers since _ I wonder whether the magic would be rekindled now?

Books played a huge part in my life. My parents were both avid readers and although they had only a small collection of their own, the house was always full of books, as well as magazines like *Punch, National Geographic, Saturday Evening Post, Weekly News. Country Life, English Ladies' Home Journal* and so on. I read everything I could lay my hands on.

I had a large bookcase of my own packed with favourites; the Grimms, Andersen, a large collection of Blyton, *Anne of Green Gables,* umpteen animal stories and many others. Some I have still: a much loved – and dated – one called *Chappie* about a troublesome dog; my Spartan post-war *Mother Goose,* illustrated in black and white; Mary Norton's *The Magic Bedknob* and *Hildebrand,* a mad horse story by John Thorburn, given to me on my tenth birthday by my teacher. Just thumbing through these brings back the smell of pine needles.

I returned again and again to Andersen, in spite of the fact that stories like *The Little Match Girl* made me miserable. Masochistic really - my mother would find me in floods of tears and say in exasperation, 'I *can't* understand why you read that book if it upsets you so much!'

There's a lot of discussion these days about the relevance of reading to a child's experience. Apart from the *School Journal* stories, most of the books we read in those days came of course from the northern hemisphere, but they unlocked the imagination and let it soar, regardless of whether wolves, castles, deserts, snow-clad Christmases or giraffes were the subject matter. It is certainly important that we provide children with material that is set within their experience as well as showing them the world, but we mustn't become insular. After all, a good story is a good story wherever it comes from and *everything* is relevant to a child. In childhood I revelled in learning about the unknown and fascinating from far away and in doing so, found the magic in my own backyard as well. The Gully (capital letters in our minds) and the culvert which led to it under the main road were dark and mysterious places where trolls and witches, monsters and dragons had their lairs and our own landscape became charged with magic as a result.

I began drawing very early on, around the age of two. Cars were a preoccupation during my preschool years so I started with them - fat and rounded 1940s style Chevrolets, Hudsons and Fords. Then I graduated to brides with acres of satin and lace, unlikely waists and bouquets clamped tightly in front. After that it was ballet dancers, all of whom seemed to be premanently perched on one leg with the other sticking out at right angles.

I was absolutely fascinated by illustration wherever I found it. I judged all books by the illustrations and would soak them up like a sponge, examining every detail minutely and noting aspects that did or did not appeal. I wanted to know *how* they were done and relished everything from Norman Rockwell covers on the *Saturday Evening Post,* to *Punch* cartoonists like Thelwell, Brockbank and Hargreaves, to the doe-eyed heroines of women's magazine stories as well as the illustrations in my own books. The turn of an eye or the handling of a leg could have me either gnashing my teeth or desperately trying to copy the technique. I inherited an observant eye from my father who missed nothing, especially things like chipped paint or damaged plants.

One of my drawing efforts at school ended up with some unexpected flourishes. I was putting the finishing touches to the good ship *Mauretania*

in my Social Studies exercise book when a large earthquake struck. The sea went right off the page before the school decamped outside to wait for the jellified ground to settle down.

At home there was an unlimited supply of paper to draw on. We had a large number of rolls of thick yellow paper in the house - I've no idea where it came from but it lasted for years and was used for lists, calculations, crossword puzzle workings and scrabble scores as well as my flights of fancy. For years I used a large pencil inscribed 'Walter's Butchery Latham Street Napier' (it came with the meat) which lasted so well I have it still.

By the time I went away to secondary school, it was understood that I was going to 'do art' for a career. I'd graduated to fashion models by this stage and fondly imagined myself sitting in on swanky fashion shows, drawing slinky models and glamorous fashions for a living. A pipe dream indeed.

There was no secondary school within reach of Iwitahi so my parents had decided that I would have to go to one of the Napier area boarding schools. However, I had been reading too many books about the 'Horrors of the Fourth Form' and had practically made myself ill at the thought of victimisation at the hands of bullying, hockey stick-waving tormentors in the dorm. My parents had a change of heart and sent me to board with friends in Tauranga instead.

At Tauranga College, I was lucky enough to have a superb art teacher, Claudia Jarman, from whom I learned a great deal. Small, birdlike, full of fire and energy, with a pronounced widow's peak, she could strike terror into the heart of even the toughest sixth form rugby player.

In order to have a year at home before heading for Art School, I did my 'Art Prelim' year with the Correspondence School. By this time, thoughts of fashion illustration had given place to something more practical and I went to Elam, majored in sculpture and ended up teaching for five years. Sculpture may not seem a logical choice for someone interested most of all in two-dimensional representation, but I had a lecturer in the classical mould, John Kavanagh, who was a stickler for form and composition. Another very important influence.

I tend to forget that my very first attempt, if it can be called that, at producing a picture book, was when I was here at Teachers' College, doing my 'Div. C' year in 1962. Peter Smith, who held together the small bunch of Fine Arts graduates, gave us an exercise to do - to plan a children's picture book. Mine was based on the family cat and dog, a long-haired dachshund and a soppy Persian, who were best mates. We drew our pictures and produced the words but the 'books' sank without trace, probably the best thing that could have happened to them.

I produced little of my own work during my teaching years - any creativity was exhausted in the classroom, I think - and only began again when I resigned to start a family. I took on illustrating for the Correspondence School to keep my hand in and to balance the demands of nappies and feeding times. As I had to draw everything from fire engines and fairies to kitchen sinks and castles, it was wonderful practice and I loved it.

With my own young reaching picture book stage in the early seventies, I became interested in what made a good book work, but it was not until Eve Sutton, a cousin by marriage, chased me into collaborating with her, that I became involved in earnest. My *Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*, which Eve wrote and I illustrated, was based on the antics of the Dodd family cat and published in 1974.

The association with Eve was a happy one but she wanted to work on hooks for older children and I had begun to have ideas of my own for picture books. With the arrogance of ignorance, I decided to try writing and the result, after months of laborious gestation, was *The Nickle Nackle Tree.*

I have worked solo ever since.

Of the 22 books I have both written and illustrated, thirteen have been Hairy Maclary and associated books, the nine others have been an assortment of stories from *The Nickle Nackle Tree*, published in 1976, to *Sniff-Snuff-Snap!* published in 1995. They tend to divide themselves into two distinct categories, with the noisy and high profile Hairy Maclary books being in one and the quieter assortment in the other. I enjoy doing the latter – they find their own little niche and for me they are a satisfying change, especially from an illustrating point of view. (It is always a little disappointing to find that some people think that I write only Hairy Maclary books.) I gained a great deal of satisfaction from producing the pictures for books like *Find me a Tiger, Dragon in a Wagon,* and *Sniff-Snuff-*

Snap! There were interesting and varied settings and characters to plan, I could vary the technique - I even needed to do what I laughingly called 'research' for them. On one occasion, this paid off; I had the lovely experience a few years ago of hearing that the carefully researched picture of the little Nepalese girl in *Dragon in a Wagon* had been greeted with delighted recognition in the depths of Nepal by a Nepalese child who had never seen a book before. It made my day!

I seem to have confined myself to animals for most of my stories, mainly because of a lifelong interest in animals and wildlife generally. There are so many stories to be had in the animal kingdom, and programmes like *Our World* on television really set the creative juices going. Who can resist orang-outangs with leaf umbrellas, surfing seals, baby-sitting meerkats, blue-footed boobies crashlanding, turtles hatching ... and so on?

I keep an 'ideas' scrapbook - it is the only way to remember all the possibilities for book ideas. It's a motley collection of bits - newspaper cuttings, photos, drawings, reminders of all sorts. I haven't a hope of living long enough to make use of everything but it is there when I need it.

The Smallest Turtle began with an *Our World* programme on a wet Sunday afternoon, *Hairy Maclary's Bone* was the unexpected outcome of a visit to the butcher, *Slinky Malinky, Open the Door* was hatched when I saw a sequence of four photographs in a *National Geographic* magazine, showing a black cat opening the door to the Vatican kitchens. I'm sure the *Dragon in a Wagon* idea came about when I found a photograph of a camel squashed grumpily in the back of a utility, and *Find Me a Tiger* was the result of becoming hooked on animal camouflage, which in turn reminded me of the time I searched for our black cat, only to find him hidden on a black cushion. So the ideas can come from anywhere, the secret is to catch them as they fly past.

People often ask me, which come first, pictures or words? I have to say that they come at the same time. The process begins with the chosen idea floating around in the mind, gathering visual images and word patterns as it goes - nothing specific, just a feel, a mood.

I write and illustrate one book a year. Since there are only 32 pages of text and picture combined, that's slow, you might think but I like my ideas to marinate. I like the luxury of being able to mess around with them, pick them up after some time and see them with new eyes. An example of this is *Sniff-Snuff-Snap!*, the story about a cantankerous and selfish warthog who is so busy seeing off the other animals that he loses the chance to drink at the waterhole himself. This story sat in my ideas book for years, went through several incarnations and even when I finally dug it out to work on it properly, the structure still required a lot of juggling to prevent the whole thing from becoming unwieldy and awkward. (Getting rid of eight elephants, seven giraffes, six zebras and so on in a believable way without total chaos was a question of logistics which needed a good deal of thought.)

Some believe that the words are more important than the pictures, others the opposite, but I feel that neither should be the case in a good picture book. Even if each half could stand alone, the whole should be an equal and perfectly integrated partnership and *more* than the sum of its parts.

John Rowe Townsend says that 'picture books are a first introduction to art and literature, no less: Therefore it is incumbent upon us all, choosers and producers alike, to demand excellence and not to be satisfied with less. All of us here know how important picture books are to a small child - I find it daunting sometimes when I remember the lasting influence they had on me.

Unfortunately we still have a way to go yet to convince some. One still gets the comment 'I'd like to try writing, I think I'll start with a picture book.' I have had too many approaches from people who say such things as, 'My friends say I'm great at cartooning and my kids love my stories so I've just started writing them down. They should be ready next week - where can I get them published?'

Picture books still receive only 30% of the Authors' Fund annual per book payment. Fifty pages I believe is the cut-off level for a 'proper' book. What does this say? That quantity matters more than quality? What the people who make such decisions have failed to recognise is that a picture book is not just a few careless words with some pictures tacked on, it is a separate category in itself, with its own integrity as a marriage of two equally important elements, carefully planned as such. In addition, as I often say to the sceptical, the fewer the words, the harder the job!

Although illustration was my main preoccupation as a child, I never aspired to write at all - my only efforts were wildly plagiaristic and firmly based on my favourite books, like *Coral Island* or *The Folk of the Faraway Tree*. However I was, I now realise, always in love with language and the power of words. My parents had keen senses of humour and at home there was always a lot of fun and nonsense with words, word games, quoting of favourite sayings and so on. I get my love of crazy names from my father, who called me 'Arabella Slapcabbage' when I was small. (I've no idea where that came from, whether he invented it or it came from a book, a radio comedy show or a skit from his Toc H concert performing days.)

My mother would wnjoy every new book with me and when I was bowled over by Dr Seuss for the first time, she was too and quotes from *Scrambled Eggs Super* went into family lore. *Scrambled Eggs Super* is an elusive book - when I was lucky enough to meet Dr Seuss in the seventies, I asked him about it, saying I'd searched for it for years. *'You* mean *Green Eggs and Ham?'* he said - he had forgotten all about it! I believe it was reprinted some years later in a collection of his stories but I still haven't managed to find it.

If we think back to the words and phrases, rhymes and lines which have stuck with us since childhood, they are the ones which have that extra something; vivid and evocative description, haunting resonance, lovely alliterative sound, musical flow or just sheer lunatic fun, like this:

Silence in the Court!
The judge is eating beans,
His wife is in the bathtub
Counting submarines.

I remember vividly the first time I came across the expression 'He licked his chops' in one of my animal stories. I must have been around six or seven and it made me laugh out loud. The word 'chops' is so descriptive of the clopping sound a dog's jaws make when he does lick his chops.

We all have snatches which stay with us: *'You* never can tell with bees,' 'He went among the villagers and blipped them on the head,' 'Staying on the Tracks No Matter What,' and especially in my case, ‘and the Motmot bird said "Motmot'. (I was delighted to discover years later that there really is a Motmot bird. It can be found from Mexico to Northern Argentina but it isn't half as interesting as the one in the *Progressive Reader* or the one in the mind's eye.)

These days we hear that language must be familiar and accessible to children. As a child I found the old-fashioned language, full of 'thees' and 'thous,' in my mother's *Grimms' Fairy Tales* (which was published around 1905) to be evocative, poetic and somehow right for the stories, even if I didn't understand every word. I loved the sound of lines such as 'Oh man of the sea, hearken to me.'

My own experience makes me feel very strongly about the need to introduce children to the wider richness there is to be had in language if only we take the trouble to delve further. But I am not pedantic about it - there is the danger of becoming self-conscious if one isn't careful. For me the most important thing is to try to sound spontaneous and natural, to amuse and entertain, and if the children learn a few new juicy words and phrases along the way, so much the better. It always seems such a pity that we use so little of the vocabulary at our disposal - there are some delicious words mouldering away unheard in the dictionary. I'm all for introducing new ones to children if they not only roll off the tongue but describe something in a different, satisfying and memorable way. What could be nicer than words like *folderol, flibbertigibbet, bamboozle, hootenanny* and, in the animal kingdom, *pottos, bandicoots, dik-diks* and *bongos?* Not to mention Motmot birds?

However I don't please all of the people all of the time. I was taken to task once by a reviewer who suggested that in using the word 'bellicose' for Hairy Maclary (chosen for its alliterative and onomatopoeic qualities), I appeared to be 'running out of vocabulary appropriate to the age of the reader' and that 'there would be many a parent who wouldn't know what bellicose meant so what use is a word like that in a children's book?' My reply to that is, 'Haven't you a dictionary in the house?' I am unrepentant - if we spend our time writing only language appropriate to the age of the reader, they will never learn anything new. How boring!

Anyway, the consumers have had the last word on the matter. Feedback suggests that they love the new words. One child was asked by his mother in a supermarket, 'What shall we have for tea?' 'A snippet of veal: was the reply.

I have used the word 'hobnobbing' in *Slinky Malinky Catflaps.* I thought long and hard about a word to describe ten cats sitting in a chummy row in the moonlight. Hobnobbing seemed just right, so I hope to hear that the children think so too.

Styles in picture book illustration have changed over the past 25 years. When I began in the seventies, there was a great flowering of techniques and styles, with a strong trend towards graphic design elements, often a rather two-dimensional effect with arbitrary flat colour, and emphasis on strong line and pattern detail. Collage and similar styles were popular too, and as colour-printing techniques became more sophisticated, picture books like those of Brian Wildsmith were a riot of glowing colour. Typical fine examples of what I would call the 'seventies look' are Pat Hutchin's *Rosie's*
Walk and Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*

Sometimes however, I think that 'artiness' in picture book illustration can take over to such an extent that the necessary sympathy with the text is pushed aside or lost. Taste in illustration is a subjective thing I know, but I have to admit that *Brian Wildsmith's ABC,* although long regarded as an artistic masterpiece, left my children cold and it didn't do much for me either. Lovely paintings but. .. ! Grand artistic flourish is fine if it is appropriate to the text, but not if it is at the expense of the whole book.

Two of my favourite illustrators are Errol Le Cain and Quentin Blake. Their work is vastly different but both have the ability to pick up a text and take it to new heights, distilling the very essence out of the words. Who could forget Blake's gloriously grey and forbidding Aunt Fidget Wonkham Strong in her iron hat in the Captain Najork story - or his rendering of Joan Aiken's Mortimer the raven? Mortimer is just an untidy flurry of black feathers with a beak but there's character and cheek in every line. Blake is very much his own man with enormous and unique talent but he never loses touch with the text he is illustrating.

The reason that all the classic picture books *are* classics, from *Millions of Cats* to the *Babar* stories, *Rosie's Walk* to *Each Peach Pear Plum,* is simply that they all have total integrity, a total harmony between word and picture. Each is definitely more than the sum of its parts.

This is an aim which is always in my mind when I am working on my own books. It would be nice occasionally to break out and produce something satisfyingly 'arty' for its own sake but it is all too easy to get carried away and forget the main purpose. Anyway, within the bounds of my own stories, it would be inappropriate. Hairy Maclary and his mates in sophisticated or overly stylised techniques would just seem all wrong. (As it is, I find that although I may feel like trying something a little different, the hand just leads me back in spite of myself!)

I do enjoy the opportunity for a little modest change, such as in *Find Me a Tiger.* The demands of camouflage called for a different technique - definitely no clear outlines.

Hairy Maclary has been around now for over fifteen years. One problem I have come up against in producing a series spread over that time is in trying to keep the consistency of the style and in depicting Hairy himself. He has evolved a little in looks; from a rather squat little terrier in the first book, he has elongated a little, his hair is wavier, his snout more pointed. I have to work very hard to stop him - and his friends - from evolving further by constant reference to previous work, even though the Essence of Hairy is in my mind! He is a caricature rather than a real dog, which presents people like animators with problems - Hairy tends to be as much the spaces
between the lines as the lines themselves. He has ridiculously spindly legs, small triangles for ears which, when you see him from the side, are still placed one slightly in front of the other. He isn't strictly correct. However he has now well and truly taken us over and (publisher) Ann Mallinson and I are hard pressed to hang on to his tail as he disappears down the road. He even has his own trademark now and dance productions to his name - we hope he won't get big-headed.

In depicting all the animal characters in my books, be they dogs, cats or warthogs, I'm always very conscious of what they are thinking. They are never anthropomorphic but I hope you can tell from their eyes what is going on in their heads. An example of this is the final picture in *Sliowbusiness,* where Hairy Maclary finds himself the recipient of a prize for Snuffiest Cat. I wanted to show from his expression that although he was chuffed to receive the first prize he had ever had his life, he was also

embarrassed lest one of his doggy mates should catch him in such a compromising situation.

I am also concerned with energy and movement - my animals are not often in static poses. This requires dredging the memory for all the animal actions and poses I can remember. A friend once said to me, 'You are very observant - that's a very masculine characteristic.' Nonsense, I say, it's just inherited genes, plus years of training. With only one elderly cat to use as model, most of the information has to come out of the reference book in the head.

When in 1972 I began to work on the pictures for *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*, the publishers, Hamish Hamilton, asked me to use a simple flat colour plus line drawing style. The colour had to be separated and choices indicated by colour samples, which meant that I had no idea what the completed pictures would look like until I saw the proofs. This was the case for *The Nickle Nackle Tree* too, only worse, as I had to try to predict the likely outcome of 75% red over 25% blue and plan accordingly. *Not* a satisfying way to work.

When in 1981 I began the long and happy relationship with Mallinson Rendel and started work on *The Smallest Turtle* and *The Apple Tree*, at last I had the luxury of simply painting pictures as they would appear in the book. So although one could say that my work changed dramatically at that point, it was as a result of the freedom from publishing restraints and demands. (Styles had been moving away from the arbitrary flat colour look to more painterly techniques anyway.)

I have found myself most comfortable with the line and watercolour style I have been using since 1981, and as my main preoccupation is with the characters and their activities, colour has tended to be secondary. That does not mean that I am ever satisfied with the results - I'm not. I just keep hoping. I can't say I have ever been influenced by anyone in particular. Other than the discovery as a child - in Dr Seuss' books - of what fun there was to be had with word and picture, especially after a diet of rather worthy and earnest post-war stories, I tend just to do my own thing.

Where to from here? Well, the ideas book is waiting, the eighth Hairy Maclary book has just been completed and as long as Hairy himself lets me get back to the desk, I am hoping to concentrate on some of my other ideas.

It has been an exciting time for picture books over the past two and a half decades. Publishers have amalgamated or disappeared, fashions have changed, new marketing theories - especially overseas - have brought in words like 'refresh,' 'revisit,' 'branding' and 'product,' words which seem more geared to toothpaste than books. We live in a world of discounts and cost-cutting, but it is heartening to know that in spite of all that, there are still publishers prepared to do battle on behalf of quality children's books and a public still waiting to read them.

I'd like to end with another quotation from John Rowe Townsend: 'I still have faith in the ability of the book to keep going. It's a tough old bird, after all.'

Publishing Chronology

1974	*My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* (with Eve Sutton)
1976	*The Nickle Nackle Tree*
1979	*Titimus Trim*
1982	*The Apple Tree*
1982	*The Smallest Turtle*
1983	*Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy*
1984	*Hairy Maclary's Bone*
1985	*Hairy Maclairy Scattercat*
1986	*Wake Up, Bear*
1987	*Hairy Maclary's Caterwaul Caper*
1988	*A Dragon in a Wagon*
1989	*Hairy Maclary's Rumpus at the Vet*
1990	*Slinky Malinky*
1991	*Find Me a Tiger*
1991	*Hairy Maclary's Showbusiness*
1992	*The Minister's Cat ABC*
1993	*Slinky Malinky, Open the Door*
1994	*Schnitzel von Krumm's Basketwork*
1995	*Sniff-Snuff-Snap!*
1996	*Schnitzel Von Krumm Forget-Me-Not*
1996	*Hairy Maclary: Six Lynley Dodd Stories*
1997	*Hairy Maclary, Sit*
1998	*Slinky Malinky Catflaps*
1999	*Hairy Maclary and Zachary Quack*